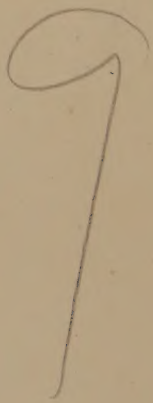

POEMS

POEMS

BY

COVENTRY PATMORE

SEVENTH COLLECTIVE EDITION

VOL. II.

THE UNKNOWN EROS

AMELIA, ETC.

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THE UNKNOWN EROS

"Deliciæ meæ esse cum filiis hominum."

PROV. VIII. 31.

PROEM.

'MANY speak wisely, some inerrably:
Witness the beast who talk'd that should have bray'd,
And Caiaphas that said
Expedient 'twas for all that One should die;
But what avails
When Love's right accent from their wisdom fails,
And the Truth-criers know not what they cry!
Say, wherefore thou,
As under bondage of some bitter vow,
Warblest no word,
When all the rest are shouting to be heard?
Why leave the fervid running just when Fame
'Gan whispering of thy name
Amongst the hard-pleased Judges of the Course?
Parch'd is thy crystal-flowing source?
Pierce, then, with thought's steel probe, the trodden ground,
Till passion's buried floods be found;
Intend thine eye
Into the dim and undiscover'd sky
Whose lustres are the pulsings of the heart,
And promptly, as thy trade is, watch to chart
The lonely suns, the mystic hazes and throng'd sparkles bright
That, named and number'd right

In sweet, transpicuous words, shall glow alway
With Love's three-stranded ray,
Red wrath, compassion golden, lazuline delight.'
  Thus, in reproof of my despondency,
My Mentor; and thus I:
  O, season strange for song!
And yet some timely power persuades my lips.
Is't England's parting soul that nerves my tongue,
As other Kingdoms, nearing their eclipse,
Have, in their latest bards, uplifted strong
The voice that was their voice in earlier days?
Is it her sudden, loud and piercing cry,
The note which those that seem too weak to sigh
Will sometimes utter just before they die?
  Lo, weary of the greatness of her ways,
There lies my Land, with hasty pulse and hard,
Her ancient beauty marr'd,
And, in her cold and aimless roving sight,
Horror of light;
Sole vigour left in her last lethargy,
Save when, at bidding of some dreadful breath,
The rising death
Rolls up with force;
And then the furiously gibbering corse
Shakes, panglessly convuls'd, and sightless stares,
Whilst one Physician pours in rousing wines,
One anodynes,
And one declares
That nothing ails it but the pains of growth.
  My last look loth
Is taken; and I turn, with the relief
Of knowing that my life-long hope and grief
Are surely vain,
To that unshapen time to come, when She,
A dim, heroic Nation long since dead,
The foulness of her agony forgot,

Shall all benignly shed
Through ages vast
The ghostly grace of her transfigured past
Over the present, harass'd and forlorn,
Of nations yet unborn ;
And this shall be the lot
Of those who, in the bird-voice and the blast
Of her omniloquent tongue,
Have truly sung
Or greatly said,
To shew as one
With those who have best done,
And be as rays,
Thro' the still altering world, around her
changeless head.
Therefore no 'plaint be mine
Of listeners none,
No hope of render'd use or proud reward,
In hasty times and hard ;
But chants as of a lonely thrush's throat
At latest eve,
That does in each calm note
Both joy and grieve ;
Notes few and strong and fine,
Gilt with sweet day's decline,
And sad with promise of a different sun.
'Mid the loud concert harsh
Of this fog-folded marsh,
To me, else dumb,
Uranian Clearness, come !
Give me to breathe in peace and in surprise
The light-thrill'd ether of your rarest skies,
Till inmost absolution start
The welling in the grateful eyes,
The heaving in the heart.
Winnow with sighs

And wash away
With tears the dust and stain of clay,
Till all the Song be Thine, as beautiful as Morn,
Bedeck'd with shining clouds of scorn;
And Thou, Inspirer, deign to brood
O'er the delighted words, and call them Very Good.
This grant, Clear Spirit; and grant that I remain
Content to ask unlikely gifts in vain.

BOOK I.

I

SAINT VALENTINE'S DAY.

WELL dost thou, Love, thy solemn Feast to hold
In vestal February;
Not rather choosing out some rosy day
From the rich coronet of the coming May,
When all things meet to marry!
O, quick, prævernal Power
That signall'st punctual through the sleepy mould
The Snowdrop's time to flower,
Fair as the rash oath of virginity
Which is first-love's first cry;
O, Baby Spring,
That flutter'st sudden 'neath the breast of Earth
A month before the birth;
Whence is the peaceful poignancy,
The joy contrite,
Sadder than sorrow, sweeter than delight,
That burthens now the breath of everything,
Though each one sighs as if to each alone
The cherish'd pang were known?
At dusk of dawn, on his dark spray apart,
With it the Blackbird breaks the young Day's heart;

In evening's hush
About it talks the heavenly-minded Thrush ;
The hill with like remorse
Smiles to the Sun's smile in his westering course ;
The fisher's drooping skiff
In yonder sheltering bay ;
The choughs that call about the shining cliff ;
The children, noisy in the setting ray ;
Own the sweet season, each thing as it may ;
Thoughts of strange kindness and forgotten peace
In me increase ;
And tears arise
Within my happy, happy Mistress' eyes,
And, lo, her lips, averted from my kiss,
Ask from Love's bounty, ah, much more than bliss!
Is't the sequester'd and exceeding sweet
Of dear Desire electing his defeat ?
Is't the waked Earth now to yon purpling cope
Uttering first-love's first cry,
Vainly renouncing, with a Seraph's sigh,
Love's natural hope ?
Fair-meaning Earth, foredoom'd to perjury !
Behold, all-amorous May,
With roses heap'd upon her laughing brows,
Avoids thee of thy vows !
Were it for thee, with her warm bosom near,
To abide the sharpness of the Seraph's sphere ?
Forget thy foolish words ;
Go to her summons gay,
Thy heart with dead, wing'd Innocencies fill'd,
Ev'n as a nest with birds
After the old ones by the hawk are kill'd.
Well dost thou, Love, to celebrate
The noon of thy soft ecstasy,
Or e'er it be too late,
Or e'er the Snowdrop die !

II

WIND AND WAVE.

The wedded light and heat,
Winnowing the witless space,
Without a let,
What are they till they beat
Against the sleepy sod, and there beget
Perchance the violet!
Is the One found,
Amongst a wilderness of as happy grace,
To make Heaven's bound;
So that in Her
All which it hath of sensitively good
Is sought and understood
After the narrow mode the mighty Heavens prefer?
She, as a little breeze
Following still Night,
Ripples the spirit's cold, deep seas
Into delight;
But, in a while,
The immeasurable smile
Is broke by fresher airs to flashes blent
With darkling discontent;
And all the subtle zephyr hurries gay,
And all the heaving ocean heaves one way,
'Tward the void sky-line and an unguess'd weal:
Until the vanward billows feel
The agitating shallows, and divine the goal,

And to foam roll,
And spread and stray
And traverse wildly, like delighted hands,
The fair and fleckless sands ;
And so the whole
Unfathomable and immense
Triumphing tide comes at the last to reach
And burst in wind-kiss'd splendours on the deaf-
'ning beach,
Where forms of children in first innocence
Laugh and fling pebbles on the rainbow'd crest
Of its untired unrest.

III

WINTER.

I, singularly moved
To love the lovely that are not beloved,
Of all the Seasons, most
Love Winter, and to trace
The sense of the Trophonian pallor on her face.
It is not death, but plenitude of peace;
And the dim cloud that does the world enfold
Hath less the characters of dark and cold
Than warmth and light asleep,
And correspondent breathing seems to keep
With the infant harvest, breathing soft below
Its eider coverlet of snow.
Nor is in field or garden anything
But, duly look'd into, contains serene
The substance of things hoped for, in the Spring,
And evidence of Summer not yet seen.
On every chance-mild day
That visits the moist shaw,
The honeysuckle, 'sdaining to be crost
In urgence of sweet life by sleet or frost,
'Voids the time's law
With still increase
Of leaflet new, and little, wandering spray;
Often, in sheltering brakes,
As one from rest disturb'd in the first hour,
Primrose or violet bewilder'd wakes,

And deems 'tis time to flower;
Though not a whisper of her voice he hear,
The buried bulb does know
The signals of the year,
And hails far Summer with his lifted spear.
The gorse-field dark, by sudden, gold caprice,
Turns, here and there, into a Jason's fleece;
Lilies, that soon in Autumn slipp'd their gowns of green,
And vanish'd into earth,
And came again, ere Autumn died, to birth,
Stand full-array'd, amidst the wavering shower,
And perfect for the Summer, less the flower;
In nook of pale or crevice of crude bark,
Thou canst not miss,
If close thou spy, to mark
The ghostly chrysalis,
That, if thou touch it, stirs in its dream dark;
And the flush'd Robin, in the evenings hoar,
Does of Love's Day, as if he saw it, sing:
But sweeter yet than dream or song of Summer or Spring
Are Winter's sometime smiles, that seem to well
From infancy ineffable;
Her wandering, languorous gaze,
So unfamiliar, so without amaze,
On the elemental, chill adversity,
The uncomprehended rudeness; and her sigh
And solemn, gathering tear,
And look of exile from some great repose, the sphere
Of ether, moved by ether only, or
By something still more tranquil.

IV

BEATA.

Of infinite Heaven the rays,
Piercing some eyelet in our cavern black,
Ended their viewless track
On thee to smite
Solely, as on a diamond stalactite,
And in mid-darkness lit a rainbow's blaze,
Wherein the absolute Reason, Power, and Love,
That erst could move
Mainly in me but toil and weariness,
Renounced their deadening might,
Renounced their undistinguishable stress
Of withering white,
And did with gladdest hues my spirit caress,
Nothing of Heaven in thee showing infinite,
Save the delight.

V

THE DAY AFTER TO-MORROW.

Perchance she droops within the hollow gulf
Which the great wave of coming pleasure draws,
Not guessing the glad cause!
Ye Clouds that on your endless journey go,
Ye Winds that westward flow,
Thou heaving Sea
That heav'st 'twixt her and me,
Tell her I come;
Then only sigh your pleasure, and be dumb;
For the sweet secret of our either self
We know.
Tell her I come,
And let her heart be still'd.
One day's controlled hope, and then one more,
And on the third our lives shall be fulfill'd!
Yet all has been before:
Palm placed in palm, twin smiles, and words astray.
What other should we say?
But shall I not, with ne'er a sign, perceive,
Whilst her sweet hands I hold,
The myriad threads and meshes manifold
Which Love shall round her weave:
The pulse in that vein making alien pause
And varying beats from this;
Down each long finger felt, a differing strand

Of silvery welcome bland ;
And in her breezy palm
And silken wrist,
Beneath the touch of my like numerous bliss
Complexly kiss'd,
A diverse and distinguishable calm ?
What should we say !
It all has been before ;
And yet our lives shall now be first fulfill'd,
And into their summ'd sweetness fall distill'd
One sweet drop more ;
One sweet drop more, in absolute increase
Of unrelapsing peace.
O, heaving Sea,
That heav'st as if for bliss of her and me,
And separatest not dear heart from heart,
Though each 'gainst other beats too far apart,
For yet awhile
Let it not seem that I behold her smile.
O, weary Love, O, folded to her breast,
Love in each moment years and years of rest,
Be calm, as being not.
Ye oceans of intolerable delight,
The blazing photosphere of central Night,
Be ye forgot.
Terror, thou swarthy Groom of Bride-bliss coy,
Let me not see thee toy.
O, Death, too tardy with thy hope intense
Of kisses close beyond conceit of sense ;
O, Life, too liberal, while to take her hand
Is more of hope than heart can understand ;
Perturb my golden patience not with joy,
Nor, through a wish, profane
The peace that should pertain
To him who does by her attraction move.
Has all not been before ?

One day's controlled hope, and one again,
And then the third, and ye shall have the rein,
O Life, Death, Terror, Love!
But soon let your unrestful rapture cease,
Ye flaming Ethers thin,
Condensing till the abiding sweetness win
One sweet drop more;
One sweet drop more in the measureless increase
Of honied peace.

VI

TRISTITIA.

Darling, with hearts conjoin'd in such a peace
That Hope, so not to cease,
Must still gaze back,
And count, along our love's most happy track,
The landmarks of like inconceiv'd increase,
Promise me this:
If thou alone should'st win
God's perfect bliss,
And I, beguiled by gracious-seeming sin,
Say, loving too much thee,
Love's last goal miss,
And any vows may then have memory,
Never, by grief for what I bear or lack,
To mar thy joyance of heav'n's jubilee.
Promise me this;
For else I should be hurl'd,
Beyond just doom
And by thy deed, to Death's interior gloom,
From the mild borders of the banish'd world
Wherein they dwell
Who builded not unalterable fate
On pride, fraud, envy, cruel lust, or hate;
Yet loved too laxly sweetness and heart's ease,
And strove the creature more than God to please.
For such as these
Loss without measure, sadness without end!

Yet not for this do thou disheaven'd be
With thinking upon me.
Though black, when scann'd from heaven's surpassing bright,
This might mean light,
Foil'd with the dim days of mortality.
For God is everywhere.
Go down to deepest Hell, and He is there,
And, as a true but quite estranged Friend,
He works, 'gainst gnashing teeth of devilish ire,
With love deep hidden lest it be blasphemed,
If possible, to blend
Ease with the pangs of its inveterate fire;
Yea, in the worst
And from His Face most wilfully accurst
Of souls in vain redeem'd,
He does with potions of oblivion kill
Remorse of the lost Love that helps them still.
Apart from these,
Near the sky-borders of that banish'd world,
Wander pale spirits among willow'd leas,
Lost beyond measure, sadden'd without end,
But since, while erring most, retaining yet
Some ineffectual fervour of regret,
Retaining still such weal
As spurned Lovers feel,
Preferring far to all the world's delight
Their loss so infinite,
Or Poets, when they mark
In the clouds dun
A loitering flush of the long sunken sun,
And turn away with tears into the dark.
Know, Dear, these are not mine
But Wisdom's words, confirmed by divine
Doctors and Saints, though fitly seldom heard
Save in their own prepense-occulted word,

Lest fools be fool'd the further by false hope,
And wrest sweet knowledge to their own decline;
And (to approve I speak within my scope)
The Mistress of that dateless exile gray
Is named in surpliced Schools *Tristitia*.
But, O, my Darling, look in thy heart and see
How unto me,
Secured of my prime care, thy happy state,
In the most unclean cell
Of sordid Hell,
And worried by the most ingenious hate,
It never could be anything but well,
Nor from my soul, full of thy sanctity,
Such pleasure die
As the poor harlot's, in whose body stirs
The innocent life that is and is not hers:
Unless, alas, this fount of my relief
By thy unheavenly grief
Were closed.
So, with a consecrating kiss
And hearts made one in past all previous peace,
And on one hope reposed,
Promise me this!

VII

THE AZALEA.

There, where the sun shines first
Against our room,
She train'd the gold Azalea, whose perfume
She, Spring-like, from her breathing grace dispersed.
Last night the delicate crests of saffron bloom,
For this their dainty likeness watch'd and nurst,
Were just at point to burst.
At dawn I dream'd, O God, that she was dead,
And groan'd aloud upon my wretched bed,
And waked, ah, God, and did not waken her,
But lay, with eyes still closed,
Perfectly bless'd in the delicious sphere
By which I knew so well that she was near,
My heart to speechless thankfulness composed.
Till 'gan to stir
A dizzy somewhat in my troubled head —
It *was* the azalea's breath, and she *was* dead!
The warm night had the lingering buds disclosed,
And I had fall'n asleep with to my breast
A chance-found letter press'd
In which she said,
'So, till to-morrow eve, my Own, adieu!
Parting's well-paid with soon again to meet,
Soon in your arms to feel so small and sweet,
Sweet to myself that am so sweet to you!'

VIII

DEPARTURE.

It was not like your great and gracious ways!
Do you, that have nought other to lament,
Never, my Love, repent
Of how, that July afternoon,
You went,
With sudden, unintelligible phrase,
And frighten'd eye,
Upon your journey of so many days,
Without a single kiss, or a good-bye?
I knew, indeed, that you were parting soon;
And so we sate, within the low sun's rays,
You whispering to me, for your voice was weak,
Your harrowing praise.
Well, it was well,
To hear you such things speak,
And I could tell
What made your eyes a growing gloom of love,
As a warm South-wind sombres a March grove.
And it was like your great and gracious ways
To turn your talk on daily things, my Dear,
Lifting the luminous, pathetic lash
To let the laughter flash,
Whilst I drew near,
Because you spoke so low that I could scarcely hear.
But all at once to leave me at the last,

More at the wonder than the loss aghast,
With huddled, unintelligible phrase,
And frighten'd eye,
And go your journey of all days
With not one kiss, or a good-bye,
And the only loveless look the look with which
you pass'd :
'Twas all unlike your great and gracious ways.

IX

EURYDICE.

Is this the portent of the day nigh past,
And of a restless grave
O'er which the eternal sadness gathers fast ;
Or but the heaped wave
Of some chance, wandering tide,
Such as that world of awe
Whose circuit, listening to a foreign law,
Conjunctures ours at unguess'd dates and wide,
Does in the Spirit's tremulous ocean draw,
To pass unfateful on, and so subside ?
Thee, whom ev'n more than Heaven loved I have,
And yet have not been true
Even to thee,
I, dreaming, night by night, seek now to see,
And, in a mortal sorrow, still pursue
Thro' sordid streets and lanes
And houses brown and bare
And many a haggard stair
Ochrous with ancient stains,
And infamous doors, opening on hapless rooms,
In whose unhaunted glooms
Dead pauper generations, witless of the sun,
Their course have run ;
And ofttimes my pursuit
Is check'd of its dear fruit
By things brimful of hate, my kith and kin,

Furious that I should keep
Their forfeit power to weep,
And mock, with living fear, their mournful malice thin.
But ever, at the last, my way I win
To where, with perfectly sad patience, nurst
By sorry comfort of assured worst,
Ingrain'd in fretted cheek and lips that pine,
On pallet poor
Thou lyest, stricken sick,
Beyond love's cure,
By all the world's neglect, but chiefly mine.
Then sweetness, sweeter than my tongue can tell,
Does in my bosom well,
And tears come free and quick
And more and more abound
For piteous passion keen at having found,
After exceeding ill, a little good;
A little good
Which, for the while,
Fleets with the current sorrow of the blood,
Though no good here has heart enough to smile.

X

THE TOYS.

My little Son, who look'd from thoughtful eyes
And moved and spoke in quiet grown-up wise,
Having my law the seventh time disobey'd,
I struck him, and dismiss'd
With hard words and unkiss'd,
His Mother, who was patient, being dead.
Then, fearing lest his grief should hinder sleep,
I visited his bed,
But found him slumbering deep,
With darken'd eyelids, and their lashes yet
From his late sobbing wet.
And I, with moan,
Kissing away his tears, left others of my own;
For, on a table drawn beside his head,
He had put, within his reach,
A box of counters and a red-vein'd stone,
A piece of glass abraded by the beach
And six or seven shells,
A bottle with bluebells
And two French copper coins, ranged there with careful art,
To comfort his sad heart.
So when that night I pray'd
To God, I wept, and said:
Ah, when at last we lie with tranced breath,
Not vexing Thee in death,

And Thou rememberest of what toys
We made our joys,
How weakly understood,
Thy great commanded good,
Then, fatherly not less
Than I whom Thou hast moulded from the clay,
Thou'lt leave Thy wrath, and say,
'I will be sorry for their childishness.'

XI

TIRED MEMORY.

The stony rock of death's insensibility
Well'd yet awhile with honey of thy love
And then was dry;
Nor could thy picture, nor thine empty glove,
Nor all thy kind, long letters, nor the band
Which really spann'd
Thy body chaste and warm,
Thenceforward move
Upon the stony rock their wearied charm.
At last, then, thou wast dead.
Yet would I not despair,
But wrought my daily task, and daily said
Many and many a fond, unfeeling prayer,
To keep my vows of faith to thee from harm.
In vain.
'For 'tis,' I said, 'all one,
The wilful faith, which has no joy or pain,
As if 'twere none.'
Then look'd I miserably round
If aught of duteous love were left undone,
And nothing found.
But, kneeling in a Church, one Easter-Day,
It came to me to say:
'Though there is no intelligible rest,
In Earth or Heaven,
For me, but on her breast,

I yield her up, again to have her given,
Or not, as, Lord, Thou wilt, and that for aye.'
And the same night, in slumber lying,
I, who had dream'd of thee as sad and sick and
dying,
And only so, nightly for all one year,
Did thee, my own most Dear,
Possess,
In gay, celestial beauty nothing coy,
And felt thy soft caress
With heretofore unknown reality of joy.
But, in our mortal air,
None thrives for long upon the happiest dream,
And fresh despair
Bade me seek round afresh for some extreme
Of unconceiv'd, interior sacrifice
Whereof the smoke might rise
To God, and 'mind him that one pray'd below.
And so,
In agony, I cried:
'My Lord, if thy strange will be this,
That I should crucify my heart,
Because my love has also been my pride,
I do submit, if I saw how, to bliss
Wherein She has no part.'
And I was heard,
And taken at my own remorseless word.
O, my most Dear,
Was't treason, as I fear?
'Twere that, and worse, to plead thy veiled mind,
Kissing thy babes, and murmuring in mine ear,
'Thou canst not be
Faithful to God, and faithless unto me!'
Ah, prophet kind!
I heard, all dumb and blind
With tears of protest; and I cannot see

But faith was broken. Yet, as I have said,
My heart was dead,
Dead of devotion and tired memory,
When a strange grace of thee
In a fair stranger, as I take it, bred
To her some tender heed,
Most innocent
Of purpose therewith blent,
And pure of faith, I think, to thee; yet such
That the pale reflex of an alien love,
So vaguely, sadly shown,
Did her heart touch
Above
All that, till then, had woo'd her for its own.
And so the fear, which is love's chilly dawn,
Flush'd faintly upon lids that droop'd like thine,
And made me weak,
By thy delusive likeness doubly drawn,
And Nature's long suspended breath of flame
Persuading soft, and whispering Duty's name,
Awhile to smile and speak
With this thy Sister sweet, and therefore mine;
Thy Sister sweet,
Who bade the wheels to stir
Of sensitive delight in the poor brain,
Dead of devotion and tired memory,
So that I lived again,
And, strange to aver,
With no relapse into the void inane,
For thee;
But (treason was't?) for thee and also her.

XII

MAGNA EST VERITAS.

Here, in this little Bay,
Full of tumultuous life and great repose,
Where, twice a day,
The purposeless, glad ocean comes and goes,
Under high cliffs, and far from the huge town,
I sit me down.
For want of me the world's course will not fail:
When all its work is done, the lie shall rot;
The truth is great, and shall prevail,
When none cares whether it prevail or not.

XIII

1867.[1]

In the year of the great crime,
When the false English Nobles and their Jew,
By God demented, slew
The Trust they stood twice pledged to keep from wrong,
One said, Take up thy Song,
That breathes the mild and almost mythic time
Of England's prime!
But I, Ah, me,
The freedom of the few
That, in our free Land, were indeed the free,
Can song renew?
Ill singing 'tis with blotting prison-bars,
How high soe'er, betwixt us and the stars;
Ill singing 'tis when there are none to hear;
And days are near
When England shall forget
The fading glow which, for a little while,
Illumes her yet,
The lovely smile
That grows so faint and wan,

[1] In this year the middle and upper classes were disfranchised by Mr. Disraeli's Government, and the final destruction of the liberties of England by the Act of 1884 rendered inevitable.

Her people shouting in her dying ear,
Are not two daws worth two of any swan!
Ye outlaw'd Best, who yet are bright
With the sunken light,
Whose common style
Is Virtue at her gracious ease,
The flower of olden sanctities,
Ye haply trust, by love's benignant guile,
To lure the dark and selfish brood
To their own hated good;
Ye haply dream
Your lives shall still their charmful sway sustain,
Unstifled by the fever'd steam
That rises from the plain.
Know, 'twas the force of function high,
In corporate exercise, and public awe
Of Nature's, Heaven's, and England's Law
That Best, though mix'd with Bad, should reign,
Which kept you in your sky!
But, when the sordid Trader caught
The loose-held sceptre from your hands distraught,
And soon, to the Mechanic vain,
Sold the proud toy for nought,
Your charm was broke, your task was sped,
Your beauty, with your honour, dead,
And though you still are dreaming sweet
Of being even now not less
Than Gods and Goddesses, ye shall not long so cheat
Your hearts of their due heaviness.
Go, get you for your evil watching shriven!
Leave to your lawful Master's itching hands
Your unking'd lands,
But keep, at least, the dignity
Of deigning not, for his smooth use, to be,
Voteless, the voted delegates

Of his strange interests, loves and hates.
In sackcloth, or in private strife
With private ill, ye may please Heaven,
And soothe the coming pangs of sinking life;
And prayer perchance may win
A term to God's indignant mood
And the orgies of the multitude,
Which now begin;
But do not hope to wave the silken rag
Of your unsanction'd flag,
And so to guide
The great ship, helmless on the swelling tide
Of that presumptuous Sea,
Unlit by sun or moon, yet inly bright
With lights innumerable that give no light,
Flames of corrupted will and scorn of right,
Rejoicing to be free.
And, now, because the dark comes on apace
When none can work for fear,
And Liberty in every Land lies slain,
And the two Tyrannies unchallenged reign,
And heavy prophecies, suspended long
At supplication of the righteous few,
And so discredited, to fulfilment throng,
Restrain'd no more by faithful prayer or tear,
And the dread baptism of blood seems near
That brings to the humbled Earth the Time of Grace,
Breathless be song,
And let Christ's own look through
The darkness, suddenly increased,
To the gray secret lingering in the East.

XIV

'IF I WERE DEAD.'

'If I were dead, you'd sometimes say, Poor Child!'
The dear lips quiver'd as they spake,
And the tears brake
From eyes which, not to grieve me, brightly smiled.
Poor Child, poor Child!
I seem to hear your laugh, your talk, your song.
It is not true that Love will do no wrong.
Poor Child!
And did you think, when you so cried and smiled,
How I, in lonely nights, should lie awake,
And of those words your full avengers make?
Poor Child, poor Child!
And now, unless it be
That sweet amends thrice told are come to thee,
O God, have Thou *no* mercy upon me!
Poor Child!

XV

PEACE.

O England, how hast thou forgot,
In dullard care for undisturb'd increase
Of gold, which profits not,
The gain which once thou knew'st was for thy peace!
Honour is peace, the peace which does accord
Alone with God's glad word:
'My peace I send you, and I send a sword.'
O England, how hast thou forgot,
How fear'st the things which make for joy, not fear,
Confronted near.
Hard days? 'Tis what the pamper'd seek to buy
With their most willing gold in weary lands.
Loss and pain risk'd? What sport but understands
These for incitements! Suddenly to die,
With conscience a blurr'd scroll?
The sunshine dreaming upon Salmon's height
Is not so sweet and white
As the most heretofore sin-spotted soul
That darts to its delight
Straight from the absolution of a faithful fight.
Myriads of homes unloosen'd of home's bond,
And fill'd with helpless babes and harmless women fond?
Let those whose pleasant chance

Took them, like me, among the German towns,
After the war that pluck'd the fangs from France,
With me pronounce
Whether the frequent black, which then array'd
Child, wife, and maid,
Did most to magnify the sombreness of grief,
Or add the beauty of a staid relief
And freshening foil
To cheerful-hearted Honour's ready smile!
  Beneath the heroic sun
Is there then none
Whose sinewy wings by choice do fly
In the fine mountain-air of public obloquy,
To tell the sleepy mongers of false ease
That war's the ordained way of all alive,
And therein with goodwill to dare and thrive
Is profit and heart's peace?
  But in his heart the fool now saith:
'The thoughts of Heaven were past all finding out,
Indeed, if it should rain
Intolerable woes upon our Land again,
After so long a drought!'
  'Will a kind Providence our vessel whelm,
With such a pious Pilot at the helm?'
  'Or let the throats be cut of pretty sheep
That care for nought but pasture rich and deep?'
  'Were 't Evangelical of God to deal so foul
    a blow
At people who hate Turks and Papists so?'
  'What, make or keep
A tax for ship and gun,
When 'tis full three to one
Yon bully but intends
To beat our friends?'
  'Let's put aside
Our costly pride.

Our appetite's not gone
Because we've learn'd to doff
Our caps, where we were used to keep them on.'
'If times get worse,
We've money in our purse,
And Patriots that know how, let who will scoff,
To buy our perils off.
Yea, blessed in our midst
Art thou who lately didst,
So cheap,
The old bargain of the Saxon with the Dane.' [1]
Thus in his heart the fool now saith;
And, lo, our trusted leaders trust fool's luck,
Which, like the whale's 'mazed chine,
When they thereon were mulling of their wine,
Will some day duck.
Remnant of Honour, brooding in the dark
Over your bitter cark,
Staring, as Rispah stared, astonied seven days,
Upon the corpses of so many sons,
Who loved her once,
Dead in the dim and lion-haunted ways,
Who could have dreamt
That times should come like these!
Prophets, indeed, taught lies when we were young,
And people loved to have it so;
For they teach well who teach their scholars' tongue!
But that the foolish both should gaze,
With feeble, fascinated face,
Upon the wan crest of the coming woe,
The billow of earthquake underneath the seas,
And sit at ease,
Or stand agape,
Without so much as stepping back to 'scape,

[1] The Alabama Treaty.

Mumbling, 'Perchance we perish if we stay:
'Tis certain wear of shoes to stir away!'
Who could have dreamt
That times should come like these!
Remnant of Honour, tongue-tied with contempt,
Consider; you are strong yet, if you please.
A hundred just men up, and arm'd but with a frown,
May hoot a hundred thousand false loons down,
Or drive them any way like geese.
But to sit silent now is to suborn
The common villainy you scorn.
In the dark hour
When phrases are in power,
And nought's to choose between
The thing which is not and which is not seen,
One fool, with lusty lungs,
Does what a hundred wise, who hate and hold their tongues,
Shall ne'er undo.
In such an hour,
When eager hands are fetter'd and too few,
And hearts alone have leave to bleed,
Speak; for a good word then is a good deed.

XVI

A FAREWELL.

With all my will, but much against my heart,
We two now part.
My Very Dear,
Our solace is, the sad road lies so clear.
It needs no art,
With faint, averted feet
And many a tear,
In our opposed paths to persevere.
Go thou to East, I West.
We will not say
There's any hope, it is so far away.
But, O, my Best,
When the one darling of our widowhead,
The nursling Grief,
Is dead,
And no dews blur our eyes
To see the peach-bloom come in evening skies,
Perchance we may,
Where now this night is day,
And even through faith of still averted feet,
Making full circle of our banishment,
Amazed meet;
The bitter journey to the bourne so sweet
Seasoning the termless feast of our content
With tears of recognition never dry.

XVII

1880-85.

Stand by,
Ye Wise, by whom Heav'n rules!
Your kingly hands suit not the hangman's tools.
When God has doom'd a glorious Past to die,
Are there no knaves and fools?
For ages yet to come your kind shall count for nought.
Smoke of the strife of other Powers
Than ours,
And tongues inscrutable with fury fraught
'Wilder the sky,
Till the far good which none can guess be wrought.
Stand by!
Since tears are vain, here let us rest and laugh,
But not too loudly; for the brave time's come,
When Best may not blaspheme the Bigger Half,
And freedom for our sort means freedom to be dumb.
Lo, how the dross and draff
Jeer up at us, and shout,
'The Day is ours, the Night is theirs!'
And urge their rout
Where the wild dawn of rising Tartarus flares.
Yon strives their Leader, lusting to be seen.
His leprosy's so perfect that men call him clean!
Listen the long, sincere, and liberal bray
Of the earnest Puller at another's hay

'Gainst aught that dares to tug the other way,
Quite void of fears
With all that noise of ruin round his ears!
Yonder the people cast their caps o'erhead,
And swear the threaten'd doom is ne'er to dread
That's come, though not yet past.
All front the horror and are none aghast;
Brag of their full-blown rights and liberties,
Nor once surmise
When each man gets his due the Nation dies;
Nay, still shout 'Progress!' as if seven plagues
Should take the laggard who would stretch his legs.
Forward! glad rush of Gergesenian swine;
You've gain'd the hill-top, but there's yet the brine.
Forward! to meet the welcome of the waves
That mount to 'whelm the freedom which enslaves.
Forward! bad corpses turn into good dung,
To feed strange futures beautiful and young.
Forward! God speed ye down the damn'd decline,
And grant ye the Fool's true good, in abject ruin's
gulf
As the Wise see him so to see himself!
Ah, Land once mine,
That seem'd to me too sweetly wise,
Too sternly fair for aught that dies,
Past is thy proud and pleasant state,
That recent date
When, strong and single, in thy sovereign heart,
The thrones of thinking, hearing, sight,
The cunning hand, the knotted thew
Of lesser powers that heave and hew,
And each the smallest beneficial part,
And merest pore of breathing, beat,
Full and complete,
The great pulse of thy generous might,
Equal in inequality,

That soul of joy in low and high ;
When not a churl but felt the Giant's heat,
Albeit he simply call'd it his,
Flush in his common labour with delight,
And not a village-Maiden's kiss
But was for this
More sweet,
And not a sorrow but did lightlier sigh,
And for its private self less greet,
The whilst that other so majestic self stood by !
Integrity so vast could well afford
To wear in working many a stain,
To pillory the cobbler vain
And license madness in a lord.
On that were all men well agreed ;
And, if they did a thing,
Their strength was with them in their deed,
And from amongst them came the shout of a king !
But, once let traitor coward meet,
Not Heaven itself can keep its feet.
Come knave who said to dastard, 'Lo,
'The Deluge !' which but needed 'No !'
For all the Atlantic's threatening roar,
If men would bravely understand,
Is softly check'd for evermore
By a firm bar of sand.
But, dastard listening knave, who said,
''Twere juster were the Giant dead,
That so yon bawlers may not miss
To vote their own pot-belly'd bliss,'
All that is past !
We saw the slaying, and were not aghast.
But ne'er a sun, on village Groom and Bride,
Albeit they guess not how it is,
At Easter or at Whitsuntide,
But shines less gay for this !

XVIII

THE TWO DESERTS.

Not greatly moved with awe am I
To learn that we may spy
Five thousand firmaments beyond our own.
The best that's known
Of the heavenly bodies does them credit small.
View'd close, the Moon's fair ball
Is of ill objects worst,
A corpse in Night's highway, naked, fire-scarr'd,
accurst;
And now they tell
That the Sun is plainly seen to boil and burst
Too horribly for hell.
So, judging from these two,
As we must do,
The Universe, outside our living Earth,
Was all conceiv'd in the Creator's mirth,
Forecasting at the time Man's spirit deep,
To make dirt cheap.
Put by the Telescope!
Better without it man may see,
Stretch'd awful in the hush'd midnight,
The ghost of his eternity.
Give me the nobler glass that swells to the eye
The things which near us lie,
Till Science rapturously hails,
In the minutest water-drop,

A torment of innumerable tails.
These at the least do live.
But rather give
A mind not much to pry
Beyond our royal-fair estate
Betwixt these deserts blank of small and great.
Wonder and beauty our own courtiers are,
Pressing to catch our gaze,
And out of obvious ways
Ne'er wandering far.

XIX

CREST AND GULF.

Much woe that man befalls
Who does not run when sent, nor come when
Heaven calls;
But whether he serve God, or his own whim,
Not matters, in the end, to any one but him;
And he as soon
Shall map the other side of the Moon,
As trace what his own deed,
In the next chop of the chance gale, shall breed.
This he may know:
His good or evil seed
Is like to grow,
For its first harvest, quite to contraries:
The father wise
Has still the hare-brain'd brood;
'Gainst evil, ill example better works than good;
The poet, fanning his mild flight
At a most keen and arduous height,
Unveils the tender heavens to horny human eyes
Amidst ingenious blasphemies.
Wouldst raise the poor, in Capuan luxury sunk?
The Nation lives but whilst its Lords are drunk!
Or spread Heav'n's partial gifts o'er all, like dew?
The Many's weedy growth withers the gracious
Few!
Strange opposites, from those, again, shall rise.

Join, then, if thee it please, the bitter jest
Of mankind's progress ; all its spectral race
Mere impotence of rest,
The heaving vain of life which cannot cease from self,
Crest altering still to gulf
And gulf to crest
In endless chace,
That leaves the tossing water anchor'd in its place!
Ah, well does he who does but stand aside,
Sans hope or fear,
And marks the crest and gulf in station sink and rear,
And prophesies 'gainst trust in such a tide :
For he sometimes is prophet, heavenly taught,
Whose message is that he sees only nought.
Nathless, discern'd may be,
By listeners at the doors of destiny,
The fly-wheel swift and still
Of God's incessant will,
Mighty to keep in bound, tho' powerless to quell,
The amorous and vehement drift of man's herd to hell.

XX

'LET BE!'

Ah, yes; we tell the good and evil trees
By fruits: But how tell these?
Who does not know
That good and ill
Are done in secret still,
And that which shews is verily but show!
How high of heart is one, and one how sweet of mood;
But not all height is holiness,
Nor every sweetness good;
And grace will sometimes lurk where who could guess?
The Critic of his kind,
Dealing to each his share,
With easy humour, hard to bear,
May not impossibly have in him shrined,
As in a gossamer globe or thickly padded pod,
Some small seed dear to God.
Haply yon wretch, so famous for his falls,
Got them beneath the Devil-defended walls
Of some high Virtue he had vow'd to win;
And that which you and I
Call his besetting sin
Is but the fume of his peculiar fire
Of inmost contrary desire,
And means wild willingness for her to die,

Dash'd with despondence of her favour sweet;
He fiercer fighting, in his worst defeat,
Than I or you,
That only courteous greet
Where he does hotly woo,
Did ever fight, in our best victory.
Another is mistook
Through his deceitful likeness to his look!
Let be, let be:
Why should I clear myself, why answer thou for me?
That shaft of slander shot
Miss'd only the right blot.
I see the shame
They cannot see:
'Tis very just they blame
The thing that's not.

XXI

'FAINT YET PURSUING.'

Heroic Good, target for which the young
Dream in their dreams that every bow is strung,
And, missing, sigh
Unfruitful, or as disbelievers die,
Thee having miss'd, I will not so revolt,
But lowlier shoot my bolt,
And lowlier still, if still I may not reach,
And my proud stomach teach
That less than highest is good, and may be high.
An even walk in life's uneven way,
Though to have dreamt of flight and not to fly
Be strange and sad,
Is not a boon that's given to all who pray.
If this I had
I'd envy none!
Nay, trod I straight for one
Year, month or week,
Should Heaven withdraw, and Satan me amerce
Of power and joy, still would I seek
Another victory with a like reverse;
Because the good of victory does not die,
As dies the failure's curse,
And what we have to gain
Is, not one battle, but a weary life's campaign.
Yet meaner lot being sent
Should more than me content;

Yea, if I lie
Among vile shards, though born for silver wings,
In the strong flight and feathers gold
Of whatsoever heavenward mounts and sings
I must by admiration so comply
That there I should my own delight behold.
Yea, though I sin each day times seven,
And dare not lift the fearfullest eyes to Heaven,
Thanks must I give
Because that seven times are not eight or nine,
And that my darkness is all mine,
And that I live
Within this oak-shade one more minute even,
Hearing the winds their Maker magnify.

XXII

VICTORY IN DEFEAT.

Ah, God, alas,
How soon it came to pass
The sweetness melted from thy barbed hook
Which I so simply took;
And I lay bleeding on the bitter land,
Afraid to stir against thy least command,
But losing all my pleasant life-blood, whence
Force should have been heart's frailty to withstand.
Life is not life at all without delight,
Nor has it any might;
And better than the insentient heart and brain
Is sharpest pain;
And better for the moment seems it to rebel,
If the great Master, from his lifted seat,
Ne'er whispers to the wearied servant 'Well!'
Yet what returns of love did I endure,
When to be pardon'd seem'd almost more sweet
Than aye to have been pure!
But day still faded to disastrous night,
And thicker darkness changed to feebler light,
Until forgiveness, without stint renew'd,
Was now no more with loving tears imbued,
Vowing no more offence.
Not less to thine Unfaithful didst thou cry,
'Come back, poor Child; be all as 'twas before.'
But I,
'No, no; I will not promise any more!

Yet, when I feel my hour is come to die,
And so I am secured of continence,
Then may I say, though haply then in vain,
"My only, only Love, O, take me back again!"'
Thereafter didst thou smite
So hard that, for a space,
Uplifted seem'd Heav'n's everlasting door,
And I indeed the darling of thy grace.
But, in some dozen changes of the moon,
A bitter mockery seem'd thy bitter boon.
The broken pinion was no longer sore.
Again, indeed, I woke
Under so dread a stroke
That all the strength it left within my heart
Was just to ache and turn, and then to turn and ache,
And some weak sign of war unceasingly to make.
And here I lie,
With no one near to mark,
Thrusting Hell's phantoms feebly in the dark,
And still at point more utterly to die.
O God, how long!
Put forth indeed thy powerful right hand,
While time is yet,
Or never shall I see the blissful land!
Thus I: then God, in pleasant speech and strong,
(Which soon I shall forget):
'The man who, though his fights be all defeats,
Still fights,
Enters at last
The heavenly Jerusalem's rejoicing streets
With glory more, and more triumphant rites
Than always-conquering Joshua's, when his blast
The frighted walls of Jericho down cast;
And, lo, the glad surprise
Of peace beyond surmise,
More than in common Saints, for ever in his eyes.

XXIII

REMEMBERED GRACE.

Since succour to the feeblest of the wise
Is charge of nobler weight
Than the security
Of many and many a foolish soul's estate,
This I affirm,
Though fools will fools more confidently be:
Whom God does once with heart to heart befriend,
He does so till the end:
And having planted life's miraculous germ,
One sweet pulsation of responsive love,
He sets him sheer above,
Not sin and bitter shame
And wreck of fame,
But Hell's insidious and more black attempt,
The envy, malice, and pride,
Which men who share so easily condone
That few ev'n list such ills as these to hide.
From these unalterably exempt,
Through the remember'd grace
Of that divine embrace,
Of his sad errors none,
Though gross to blame,
Shall cast him lower than the cleansing flame,
Nor make him quite depart
From the small flock named 'after God's own heart,'

And to themselves unknown.
Nor can he quail
In faith, nor flush nor pale
When all the other idiot people spell
How this or that new Prophet's word belies
Their last high oracle ;
But constantly his soul
Points to its pole
Ev'n as the needle points, and knows not why ;
And, under the ever-changing clouds of doubt,
When others cry,
'The stars, if stars there were,
Are quench'd and out!'
To him, uplooking t'ward the hills for aid,
Appear, at need display'd,
Gaps in the low-hung gloom, and, bright in air,
Orion or the Bear.

XXIV

VESICA PISCIS.

In strenuous hope I wrought,
And hope seem'd still betray'd ;
Lastly I said,
'I have labour'd through the Night, nor yet
Have taken aught ;
But at Thy word I will again cast forth the net!'
And, lo, I caught
(Oh, quite unlike and quite beyond my thought,)
Not the quick, shining harvest of the Sea,
For food, my wish,
But Thee!
Then, hiding even in me,
As hid was Simon's coin within the fish,
Thou sigh'd'st, with joy, 'Be dumb,
Or speak but of forgotten things to far-off times
to come.'

BOOK II.

I

TO THE UNKNOWN EROS.

WHAT rumour'd heavens are these
Which not a poet sings,
O, Unknown Eros? What this breeze
Of sudden wings
Speeding at far returns of time from interstellar space
To fan my very face,
And gone as fleet,
Through delicatest ether feathering soft their solitary beat,
With ne'er a light plume dropp'd, nor any trace
To speak of whence they came, or whither they depart?
And why this palpitating heart,
This blind and unrelated joy,
This meaningless desire,
That moves me like the Child
Who in the flushing darkness troubled lies,
Inventing lonely prophecies,
Which even to his Mother mild
He dares not tell;
To which himself is infidel;
His heart not less on fire

With dreams impossible as wildest Arab Tale,
(So thinks the boy,)
With dreams that turn him red and pale,
Yet less impossible and wild
Than those which bashful Love, in his own way and hour,
Shall duly bring to flower?
O, Unknown Eros, sire of awful bliss,
What portent and what Delphic word,
Such as in form of snake forebodes the bird,
Is this?
In me life's even flood
What eddies thus?
What in its ruddy orbit lifts the blood,
Like a perturbed moon of Uranus,
Reaching to some great world in ungauged darkness hid;
And whence
This rapture of the sense
Which, by thy whisper bid,
Reveres with obscure rite and sacramental sign
A bond I know not of nor dimly can divine;
This subject loyalty which longs
For chains and thongs
Woven of gossamer and adamant,
To bind me to my unguess'd want,
And so to lie,
Between those quivering plumes that thro' fine ether pant,
For hopeless, sweet eternity?
What God unhonour'd hitherto in songs,
Or which, that now
Forgettest the disguise
That Gods must wear who visit human eyes,
Art Thou?
Thou art not Amor; or, if so, yon pyre,

That waits the willing victim, flames with vestal
fire ;
Nor mooned Queen of maids ; or, if thou'rt she,
Ah, then, from Thee
Let Bride and Bridegroom learn what kisses be !
In what veil'd hymn
Or mystic dance
Would he that were thy Priest advance
Thine earthly praise, thy glory limn ?
Say, should the feet that feel thy thought
In double-center'd circuit run,
In that compulsive focus, Nought,
In this a furnace like the sun ;
And might some note of thy renown
And high behest
Thus in enigma be expressed :
' There lies the crown
Which all thy longing cures.
Refuse it, Mortal, that it may be yours !
It is a Spirit, though it seems red gold ;
And such may no man, but by shunning, hold.
Refuse it, till refusing be despair ;
And thou shalt feel the phantom in thy hair.'

II

THE CONTRACT.

Twice thirty centuries and more ago,
All in a heavenly Abyssinian vale,
Man first met woman ; and the ruddy snow
On many-ridgëd Abora turn'd pale,
And the song choked within the nightingale.
A mild white furnace in the thorough blast
Of purest spirit seem'd She as she pass'd ;
And of the Man enough that this be said,
He look'd her Head.
Towards their bower
Together as they went,
With hearts conceiving torrents of content,
And linger'd prologue fit for Paradise,
He, gathering power
From dear persuasion of the dim-lit hour,
And doubted sanction of her sparkling eyes,
Thus supplicates her conjugal assent,
And thus she makes replies :
'Lo, Eve, the Day burns on the snowy height,
But here is mellow night !'
'Here let us rest. The languor of the light
Is in my feet.
It is thy strength, my Love, that makes me weak ;
Thy strength it is that makes my weakness sweet.
What would thy kiss'd lips speak ?'
'See, what a world of roses I have spread

To make the bridal bed.
Come, Beauty's self and Love's, thus to thy throne
be led!'
'My Lord, my Wisdom, nay!
Does not yon love-delighted Planet run,
(Haply against her heart,)
A space apart
For ever from her strong-persuading Sun!
O say,
Shall we no voluntary bars
Set to our drift? I, Sister of the Stars,
And Thou, my glorious, course-compelling Day!'
'Yea, yea!
Was it an echo of her coming word
Which, ere she spake, I heard?
Or through what strange distrust was I, her Head,
Not first this thing to have said?
Alway
Speaks not within my breast
The uncompulsive, great and sweet behest
Of something bright,
Not named, not known, and yet more manifest
Than is the morn,
The sun being just at point then to be born?
O Eve, take back thy "Nay."
Trust me, Beloved, ever in all to mean
Thy blissful service, sacrificial, keen;
But bondless be that service, and let speak—'
'This other world of roses in my cheek,
Which hide them in thy breast, and deepening seek
That thou decree if they mean Yea or Nay.'
'Did e'er so sweet a word such sweet gainsay!'
'And when I lean, Love, on you, thus, and smile
So that my Nay seems Yea,
You must the while
Thence be confirm'd that I deny you still.'

'I will, I will!'
'And when my arms are round your neck, like this,
And I, as now,
Melt like a golden ingot in your kiss,
Then, more than ever, shall your splendid word
Be as Archangel Michael's severing sword!
Speak, speak!
Your might, Love, makes me weak,
Your might it is that makes my weakness sweet.'
'I vow, I vow!'
'And are you happy, O, my Hero and Lord;
And is your joy complete?'
'Yea, with my joyful heart my body rocks,
And joy comes down from Heaven in floods and shocks,
As from Mount Abora comes the avalanche.'
'My Law, my Light!
Then am I yours as your high mind may list.
No wile shall lure you, none can I resist!'
Thus the first Eve
With much enamour'd Adam did enact
Their mutual free contract
Of virgin spousals, blissful beyond flight
Of modern thought, with great intention staunch,
Though unobliged until that binding pact.
Whether She kept her word, or He the mind
To hold her, wavering, to his own restraint,
Answer, ye pleasures faint,
Ye fiery throes, and upturn'd eyeballs blind
Of sick-at-heart Mankind,
Whom nothing succour can,
Until a heaven-caress'd and happier Eve
Be join'd with some glad Saint
In like espousals, blessed upon Earth,
And she her Fruit forth bring;

No numb, chill-hearted, shaken-witted thing,
'Plaining his little span,
But of proud virgin joy the appropriate birth,
The Son of God and Man.

III

ARBOR VITÆ.

With honeysuckle, over-sweet, festoon'd ;
With bitter ivy bound ;
Terraced with funguses unsound ;
Deform'd with many a boss
And closed scar, o'ercushion'd deep with moss ;
Bunch'd all about with pagan mistletoe ;
And thick with nests of the hoarse bird
That talks, but understands not his own word ;
Stands, and so stood a thousand years ago,
A single tree.
Thunder has done its worst among its twigs,
Where the great crest yet blackens, never pruned,
But in its heart, alway
Ready to push new verdurous boughs, whene'er
The rotting saplings near it fall and leave it air,
Is all antiquity and no decay.
Rich, though rejected by the forest-pigs,
Its fruit, beneath whose rough, concealing rind
They that will break it find
Heart-succouring savour of each several meat,
And kernell'd drink of brain-renewing power,
With bitter condiment and sour,
And sweet economy of sweet,
And odours that remind
Of haunts of childhood and a different day.
Beside this tree,
Praising no Gods nor blaming, sans a wish,
Sits, Tartar-like, the Time's civility,
And eats its dead-dog off a golden dish.

IV

THE STANDARDS.

That last,
Blown from our Sion of the Seven Hills,
Was no uncertain blast!
Listen: the warning all the champaign fills,
And minatory murmurs, answering, mar
The Night, both near and far,
Perplexing many a drowsy citadel
Beneath whose ill-watch'd walls the Powers of Hell,
With armed jar
And angry threat, surcease
Their long-kept compact of contemptuous peace!
Lo, yonder, where our little English band,
With peace in heart and wrath in hand,
Have dimly ta'en their stand,
Sweetly the light
Shines from the solitary peak at Edgbaston,
Whence, o'er the dawning Land,
Gleam the gold blazonries of Love irate
'Gainst the black flag of Hate.[1]
Envy not, little band,
Your brothers under the Hohenzollern hoof
Put to the splendid proof.
Your hour is near!

[1] This Piece was written in the year 1874, soon after the publication of an incendiary pamphlet by Mr. Gladstone against the English Catholics, occasioned by the Vatican Council.

The spectre-haunted time of idle Night,
Your only fear,
Thank God, is done,
And Day and War, Man's work-time and delight,
Begun.
Ho, ye of the van there, veterans great of cheer,
Look to your footing, when, from yonder verge,
The wish'd Sun shall emerge;
Lest once again the Flower of Sharon bloom
After a way the Stalk call heresy.
Strange splendour and strange gloom
Alike confuse the path
Of customary faith;
And when the dim-seen mountains turn to flame
And every roadside atom is a spark,
The dazzled sense, that used was to the dark,
May well doubt, 'Is't the safe way and the same
By which we came
From Egypt, and to Canaan mean to go?'
But know,
The clearness then so marvellously increas'd,
The light'ning shining Westward from the East,
Is the great promised sign
Of His victorious and divine
Approach, whose coming in the clouds shall be,
As erst was His humility,
A stumbling unto some, the first bid to the Feast.
Cry, Ho!
Good speed to them that come and them that go
From either gathering host,
And, after feeble, false allegiance, now first know
Their post.
Ho, ye
Who loved our Flag
Only because there flapp'd none other rag
Which gentlemen might doff to, and such be,

'Save your gentility!
For leagued, alas, are we
With many a faithful rogue
Discrediting bright Truth with dirt and brogue;
And flatterers, too,
That still would sniff the grass
After the 'broider'd shoe,
And swear it smelt like musk where He did pass,
Though he were Borgia or Caiaphas.
Ho, ye
Who dread the bondage of the boundless fields
Which Heaven's allegiance yields,
And, like to house-hatch'd finches, hop not free
Unless 'tween walls of wire,
Look, there be many cages: choose to your desire!
Ho, ye,
Of God the least beloved, of Man the most,
That like not leaguing with the lesser host,
Behold the invested Mount,
And that assaulting Sea with ne'er a coast.
You need not stop to count!
  But come up, ye
Who adore, in any way,
Our God by His wide-honour'd Name of YEA.
Come up; for where ye stand ye cannot stay.
Come all
That either mood of heavenly joyance know,
And, on the ladder hierarchical,
Have seen the order'd Angels to and fro
Descending with the pride of service sweet,
Ascending, with the rapture of receipt!
Come who have felt, in soul and heart and sense,
The entire obedience
Which opes the bosom, like a blissful wife,
To the Husband of all life!
Come ye that find contentment's very core

In the light store
And daisied path
Of Poverty,
And know how more
A small thing that the righteous hath
Availeth than the ungodly's riches great.
Come likewise ye
Which do not yet disown as out of date
That brightest third of the dead Virtues three,
Of Love the crown elate
And daintiest glee!
Come up, come up, and join our little band.
Our time is near at hand.
The sanction of the world's undying hate
Means more than flaunted flags in windy air.
Be ye of gathering fate
Now gladly ware.
Now from the matrix, by God's grinding wrought,
The brilliant shall be brought;
The white stone mystic set between the eyes
Of them that get the prize;
Yea, part and parcel of that mighty Stone
Which shall be thrown
Into the Sea, and Sea shall be no more.

V

SPONSA DEI.

What is this Maiden fair,
The laughing of whose eye
Is in man's heart renew'd virginity ;
Who yet sick longing breeds
For marriage which exceeds
The inventive guess of Love to satisfy
With hope of utter binding, and of loosing endless
dear despair ?
What gleams about her shine,
More transient than delight and more divine !
If she does something but a little sweet,
As gaze towards the glass to set her hair,
See how his soul falls humbled at her feet !
Her gentle step, to go or come,
Gains her more merit than a martyrdom ;
And, if she dance, it doth such grace confer
As opes the heaven of heavens to more than her,
And makes a rival of her worshipper.
To die unknown for her were little cost !
So is she without guile,
Her mere refused smile
Makes up the sum of that which may be lost !
Who is this Fair
Whom each hath seen,
The darkest once in this bewailed dell,
Be he not destin'd for the glooms of hell ?

Whom each hath seen
And known, with sharp remorse and sweet, as Queen
And tear-glad Mistress of his hopes of bliss,
Too fair for man to kiss?
Who is this only happy She,
Whom, by a frantic flight of courtesy,
Born of despair
Of better lodging for his Spirit fair,
He adores as Margaret, Maude, or Cecily?
And what this sigh,
That each one heaves for Earth's last lowlihead
And the Heaven high
Ineffably lock'd in dateless bridal-bed?
Are all, then, mad, or is it prophecy?
'Sons now we are of God,' as we have heard,
'But what we shall be hath not yet appear'd.'
O, Heart, remember thee,
That Man is none,
Save One.
What if this Lady be thy Soul, and He
Who claims to enjoy her sacred beauty be,
Not thou, but God; and thy sick fire
A female vanity,
Such as a Bride, viewing her mirror'd charms,
Feels when she sighs, 'All these are for his arms!'
A reflex heat
Flash'd on thy cheek from His immense desire,
Which waits to crown, beyond thy brain's conceit,
Thy nameless, secret, hopeless longing sweet,
Not by-and-by, but now,
Unless deny Him thou!

VI

LEGEM TUAM DILEXI.

The 'Infinite.' Word horrible! at feud
With life, and the braced mood
Of power and joy and love;
Forbidden, by wise heathen ev'n, to be
Spoken of Deity,
Whose Name, on popular altars, was 'The Unknown,'
Because, or ere It was reveal'd as One
Confined in Three,
The people fear'd that it might prove
Infinity,
The blazon which the devils desired to gain;
And God, for their confusion, laugh'd consent;
Yet did so far relent,
That they might seek relief, and not in vain,
In dashing of themselves against the shores of pain.
Nor bides alone in hell
The bond-disdaining spirit boiling to rebel.
But for compulsion of strong grace,
The pebble in the road
Would straight explode,
And fill the ghastly boundlessness of space.
The furious power,
To soft growth twice constrain'd in leaf and flower,
Protests, and longs to flash its faint self far
Beyond the dimmest star.

The same
Seditious flame.
Beat backward with reduplicated might,
Struggles alive within its stricter term,
And is the worm.
And the just Man does on himself affirm
God's limits, and is conscious of delight,
Freedom and right;
And so His Semblance is, Who, every hour,
By day and night,
Buildeth new bulwarks 'gainst the Infinite.
For, ah, who can express
How full of bonds and simpleness
Is God,
How narrow is He,
And how the wide, waste field of possibility
Is only trod
Straight to His homestead in the human heart,
And all His art
Is as the babe's that wins his Mother to repeat
Her little song so sweet!
What is the chief news of the Night?
Lo, iron and salt, heat, weight and light
In every star that drifts on the great breeze!
And these
Mean Man,
Darling of God, Whose thoughts but live and move
Round him; Who woos his will
To wedlock with His own, and does distil
To that drop's span
The atta of all rose-fields of all love!
Therefore the soul select assumes the stress
Of bonds unbid, which God's own style express
Better than well,
And aye hath, cloister'd, borne,
To the Clown's scorn,

The fetters of the threefold golden chain :
Narrowing to nothing all his worldly gain ;
(Howbeit in vain ;
For to have nought
Is to have all things without care or thought !)
Surrendering, abject, to his equal's rule,
As though he were a fool,
The free wings of the will ;
(More vainly still ;
For none knows rightly what 'tis to be free
But only he
Who, vow'd against all choice, and fill'd with awe
Of the ofttimes dumb or clouded Oracle,
Does wiser than to spell,
In his own suit, the least word of the Law !)
And, lastly, bartering life's dear bliss for pain ;
But evermore in vain ;
For joy (rejoice ye Few that tasted have !)
Is Love's obedience
Against the genial laws of natural sense,
Whose wide, self-dissipating wave,
Prison'd in artful dykes,
Trembling returns and strikes
Thence to its source again,
In backward billows fleet,
Crest crossing crest ecstatic as they greet,
Thrilling each vein,
Exploring every chasm and cove
Of the full heart with floods of honied love.
And every principal street
And obscure alley and lane
Of the intricate brain
With brimming rivers of light and breezes sweet
Of the primordial heat ;
Till, unto view of me and thee,
Lost the intense life be,

Or ludicrously display'd, by force
Of distance; as a soaring eagle, or a horse
On far-off hillside shewn,
May seem a gust-driv'n rag or a dead stone.
Nor by such bonds alone—
But more I leave to say,
Fitly revering the Wild Ass's bray,
Also his hoof,
Of which, go where you will, the marks remain
Where the religious walls have hid the bright
reproof.

VII

TO THE BODY.

Creation's and Creator's crowning good ;
Wall of infinitude ;
Foundation of the sky,
In Heaven forecast
And long'd for from eternity,
Though laid the last ;
Reverberating dome,
Of music cunningly built home
Against the void and indolent disgrace
Of unresponsive space ;
Little, sequester'd pleasure-house
For God and for His Spouse ;
Elaborately, yea, past conceiving, fair,
Since, from the graced decorum of the hair,
Ev'n to the tingling, sweet
Soles of the simple, earth-confiding feet,
And from the inmost heart
Outwards unto the thin
Silk curtains of the skin,
Every least part
Astonish'd hears
And sweet replies to some like region of the spheres ;
Form'd for a dignity prophets but darkly name,
Lest shameless men cry 'Shame!'
So rich with wealth conceal'd

That Heaven and Hell fight chiefly for this field;
Clinging to everything that pleases thee
With indefectible fidelity;
Alas, so true
To all thy friendships that no grace
Thee from thy sin can wholly disembrace;
Which thus 'bides with thee as the Jebusite,
That, maugre all God's promises could do,
The chosen People never conquer'd quite;
Who therefore lived with them,
And that by formal truce and as of right,
In metropolitan Jerusalem.
For which false fealty
Thou needs must, for a season, lie
In the grave's arms, foul and unshriven,
Albeit, in Heaven,
Thy crimson-throbbing Glow
Into its old abode aye pants to go,
And does with envy see
Enoch, Elijah, and the Lady, she
Who left the roses in her body's lieu.
O, if the pleasures I have known in thee
But my poor faith's poor first-fruits be,
What quintessential, keen, ethereal bliss
Then shall be his
Who has thy birth-time's consecrating dew
For death's sweet chrism retain'd,
Quick, tender, virginal, and unprofaned!

VIII

'SING US ONE OF THE SONGS OF SION.'

How sing the Lord's Song in so strange a
Land?
A torrid waste of water-mocking sand;
Oases of wild grapes;
A dull, malodorous fog
O'er a once Sacred River's wandering strand,
Its ancient tillage all gone back to bog;
A busy synod of blest cats and apes
Exposing the poor trick of earth and star
With worshipp'd snouts oracular;
Prophets to whose blind stare
The heavens the glory of God do not declare,
Skill'd in such question nice
As why one conjures toads who fails with lice,
And hatching snakes from sticks in such a swarm
As quite to surfeit Aaron's bigger worm;
A nation which has got
A lie in her right hand,
And knows it not;
With Pharaohs to her mind, each drifting as a
log
Which way the foul stream flows,
More harden'd the more plagued with fly and
frog!
How should sad Exile sing in such a Land?
How should ye understand?

What could he win but jeers,
Or howls, such as sweet music draws from dog,
Who told of marriage-feasting to the man
That nothing knows of food but bread of bran?
Besides, if aught such ears
Might e'er unclog,
There lives but one, with tones for Sion meet.
Behoveful, zealous, beautiful, elect,
Mild, firm, judicious, loving, bold, discreet,
Without superfluousness, without defect,
Few are his words, and find but scant respect,
Nay, scorn from some, for God's good cause agog.
Silence in such a Land is oftenest such men's speech.
O, that I might his holy secret reach;
O, might I catch his mantle when he goes;
O, that I were so gentle and so sweet,
So I might deal fair Sion's foolish foes
Such blows!

IX

DELICIÆ SAPIENTIÆ DE AMORE.

Love, light for me
Thy ruddiest blazing torch,
That I, albeit a beggar by the Porch
Of the glad Palace of Virginity,
May gaze within, and sing the pomp I see;
For, crown'd with roses all,
'Tis there, O Love, they keep thy festival!
But first warn off the beatific spot
Those wretched who have not
Even afar beheld the shining wall,
And those who, once beholding, have forgot,
And those, most vile, who dress
The charnel spectre drear
Of utterly dishallow'd nothingness
In that refulgent fame,
And cry, Lo, here!
And name
The Lady whose smiles inflame
The sphere.
Bring, Love, anear,
And bid be not afraid
Young Lover true, and love-foreboding Maid,
And wedded Spouse, if virginal of thought;
For I will sing of nought
Less sweet to hear
Than seems

A music in their half-remember'd dreams.
The magnet calls the steel:
Answers the iron to the magnet's breath;
What do they feel
But death!
The clouds of summer kiss in flame and rain,
And are not found again;
But the heavens themselves eternal are with fire
Of unapproach'd desire,
By the aching heart of Love, which cannot rest,
In blissfullest pathos so indeed possess'd.
O, spousals high;
O, doctrine blest,
Unutterable in even the happiest sigh;
This know ye all
Who can recall
With what a welling of indignant tears
Love's simpleness first hears
The meaning of his mortal covenant,
And from what pride comes down
To wear the crown
Of which 'twas very heaven to feel the want.
How envies he the ways
Of yonder hopeless star,
And so would laugh and yearn
With trembling lids eterne,
Ineffably content from infinitely far
Only to gaze
On his bright Mistress's responding rays,
That never know eclipse;
And, once in his long year,
With præternuptial ecstasy and fear,
By the delicious law of that ellipse
Wherein all citizens of ether move,
With hastening pace to come
Nearer, though never near,

His Love
And always inaccessible sweet Home;
There on his path doubly to burn.
Kiss'd by her doubled light
That whispers of its source,
The ardent secret ever clothed with Night,
Then go forth in new force
Towards a new return,
Rejoicing as a Bridegroom on his course!
This know ye all;
Therefore gaze bold,
That so in you be joyful hope increas'd,
Thorough the Palace portals, and behold
The dainty and unsating Marriage-Feast.
O, hear
Them singing clear
'Cor meum et caro mea' round the 'I am,'
The Husband of the Heavens, and the Lamb
Whom they for ever follow there that kept,
Or losing, never slept
Till they reconquer'd had in mortal fight
The standard white.
O, hear
From the harps they bore from Earth, five-strung,
what music springs,
While the glad Spirits chide
The wondering strings!
And how the shining sacrificial Choirs,
Offering for aye their dearest hearts' desires,
Which to their hearts come back beatified,
Hymn, the bright aisles along,
The nuptial song,
Song ever new to us and them, that saith,
'Hail Virgin in Virginity a Spouse!'
Heard first below
Within the little house

At Nazareth ;
Heard yet in many a cell where brides of Christ
Lie hid, emparadised,
And where, although
By the hour 'tis night,
There's light,
The Day still lingering in the lap of snow.
Gaze and be not afraid
Ye wedded few that honour, in sweet thought
And glittering will,
So freshly from the garden gather still
The lily sacrificed ;
For ye, though self-suspected here for nought,
Are highly styled
With the thousands twelve times twelve of undefiled.
Gaze and be not afraid
Young Lover true and love-foreboding Maid.
The full noon of deific vision bright
Abashes nor abates
No spark minute of Nature's keen delight.
'Tis there your Hymen waits !
There where in courts afar, all unconfused, they crowd,
As fumes the starlight soft
In gulfs of cloud,
And each to the other, well-content,
Sighs oft,
''Twas this we meant !'
Gaze without blame
Ye in whom living Love yet blushes for dead shame.
There of pure Virgins none
Is fairer seen,
Save One,
Than Mary Magdalene.

Gaze without doubt or fear
Ye to whom generous Love, by any name, is dear.
Love makes the life to be
A fount perpetual of virginity;
For, lo, the Elect
Of generous Love, how named soe'er, affect
Nothing but God,
Or mediate or direct,
Nothing but God,
The Husband of the Heavens:
And who Him love, in potence great or small,
Are, one and all,
Heirs of the Palace glad,
And inly clad
With the bridal robes of ardour virginal.

X

THE CRY AT MIDNIGHT.

' The Midge's wing beats to and fro
A thousand times ere one can utter ' O !
And Sirius' ball
Does on his business run
As many times immenser than the Sun.
Why should things not be great as well as small,
Or move like light as well as move at all ?
St. Michael fills his place, I mine, and, if you please,
We will respect each other's provinces,
I marv'lling not at him, nor he at me.
But, if thou must go gaping, let it be
That One who could make Michael should make
thee.
O, foolish Man, meting things low and high
By self, that accidental quantity !
With this conceit, Philosophy stalks frail
As peacock staggering underneath his tail.
Who judge of Plays from their own penny gaff,
At God's great theatre will hiss and laugh ;
For what's a Saint to them
Brought up in modern virtues brummagem ?
With garments grimed and lamps gone all to snuff,
And counting others for like Virgins queer,
To list those others cry, ' Our Bridegroom's near ! '
Meaning their God, is surely quite enough
To make them rend their clothes and bawl out,
' Blasphemy ! '

XI

AURAS OF DELIGHT.

Beautiful habitations, auras of delight !
Who shall bewail the crags and bitter foam
And angry sword-blades flashing left and right
Which guard your glittering height,
That none thereby may come !
The vision which we have
Revere we so,
That yet we crave
To foot those fields of ne'er-profaned snow ?
I, with heart-quake,
Dreaming or thinking of that realm of Love,
See, oft, a dove
Tangled in frightful nuptials with a snake ;
The tortured knot,
Now, like a kite scant-weighted, flung bewitch'd
Sunwards, now pitch'd,
Tail over head, down, but with no taste got
Eternally
Of rest in either ruin or the sky,
But bird and vermin each incessant strives,
With vain dilaceration of both lives,
'Gainst its abhorred bond insoluble,
Coveting fiercer any separate hell
Than the most weary Soul in Purgatory
On God's sweet breast to lie.
And, in this sign, I con

The guerdon of that golden Cup, fulfill'd
With fornications foul of Babylon,
The heart where good is well-perceiv'd and known,
Yet is not will'd ;
And Him I thank, who can make live again,
The dust, but not the joy we once profane,
That I, of ye,
Beautiful habitations, auras of delight,
In childish years and since had sometime sense and sight,
But that ye vanish'd quite,
Even from memory,
Ere I could get my breath, and whisper 'See!'
But did for me
They altogether die,
Those trackless glories glimps'd in upper sky?
Were they of chance, or vain,
Nor good at all again
For curb of heart or fret?
Nay, though, by grace,
Lest, haply, I refuse God to His face,
Their likeness wholly I forget,
Ah, yet,
Often in straits which else for me were ill,
I mind me still
I *did* respire the lonely auras sweet,
I *did* the blest abodes behold, and, at the mountains' feet,
Bathed in the holy Stream by Hermon's thymy hill.

XII

EROS AND PSYCHE.

'Love, I heard tell of thee so oft!
Yea, thrice my face and bosom flush'd with heat
Of sudden wings,
Through delicatest ether feathering soft
Their solitary beat.
Long did I muse what service or what charms
Might lure thee, blissful Bird, into mine arms;
And nets I made,
But not of the fit strings.
At last, of endless failure much afraid,
To-night I would do nothing but lie still,
And promise, wert thou once within my window-sill,
Thine unknown will.
In nets' default,
Finch-like me seem'd thou might'st be ta'en with salt;
And here—and how thou mad'st me start!—
Thou art.'

'O Mortal, by Immortals' cunning led,
Who shew'd you how for Gods to bait your bed?
Ah, Psyche, guess'd you nought
I craved but to be caught?
Wanton, it was not you,
But I that did so passionately sue;
And for your beauty, not unscath'd, I fought
With Hades, ere I own'd in you a thought!'

'O, heavenly Lover true,

Is this thy mouth upon my forehead press'd ?
Are these thine arms about my bosom link'd ?
Are these thy hands that tremble near my heart,
Where join two hearts, for juncture more distinct ?
By thee and by my maiden zone caress'd,
What dim, waste tracts of life shine sudden, like
moonbeams
On windless ocean shaken by sweet dreams !
Ah, stir not to depart !
Kiss me again, thy Wife and Virgin too !
O Love, that, like a rose,
Deckest my breast with beautiful repose,
Kiss me again, and clasp me round the heart,
Till fill'd with thee am I
As the cocoon is with the butterfly !
—Yet how 'scape quite
Nor pluck pure pleasure with profane delight ?
How know I that my Love is what he seems !
Give me a sign
That, in the pitchy night,
Comes to my pillow an immortal Spouse,
And not a fiend, hiding with happy boughs
Of palm and asphodel
The pits of hell !'
'Tis this :
I make the childless to keep joyful house.
Below your bosom, mortal Mistress mine,
Immortal by my kiss,
Leaps what sweet pain ?
A fiend, my Psyche, comes with barren bliss,
A God's embraces never are in vain.'
'I own
A life not mine within my golden zone.
Yea, how
'Tis easier grown
Thine arduous rule to don

Than for a Bride to put her bride-dress on!
Nay, rather, now
'Tis no more service to be borne serene,
Whither thou wilt, thy stormful wings between.
But, Oh,
Can I endure
This flame, yet live for what thou lov'st me, pure?'
'Himself the God let blame
If all about him bursts to quenchless flame!
My Darling, know
Your spotless fairness is not match'd in snow,
But in the integrity of fire.
Whate'er you are, Sweet, I require.
A sorry God were he
That fewer claim'd than all Love's mighty kingdoms three!'
'Much marvel I
That thou, the greatest of the Powers above,
Me visitest with such exceeding love.
What thing is this?
A God to make me, nothing, needful to his bliss,
And humbly wait my favour for a kiss!
Yea, all thy legions of liege deity
To look into this mystery desire.'
'Content you, Dear, with them, this marvel to admire,
And lay your foolish little head to rest
On my familiar breast.
Should a high King, leaving his arduous throne,
Sue from her hedge a little Gipsy Maid,
For far-off royal ancestry bewray'd
By some wild beauties, to herself unknown;
Some voidness of herself in her strange ways
Which to his bounteous fulness promised dainty praise;
Some power, by all but him unguess'd,

Of growing king-like were she king-caress'd ;
And should he bid his dames of loftiest grade
Put off her rags and make her lowlihead
Pure for the soft midst of his perfumed bed,
So to forget, kind-couch'd with her alone,
His empire, in her winsome joyance free ;
What would he do, if such a fool were she
As at his grandeur there to gape and quake,
Mindless of love's supreme equality,
And of his heart, so simple for her sake
That all he ask'd, for making her all-blest,
Was that her nothingness alway
Should yield such easy fee as frank to play
Or sleep delighted in her Monarch's breast,
Feeling her nothingness her giddiest boast,
As being the charm for which he loved her most ?
What if this reed,
Through which the King thought love-tunes to have blown,
Should shriek, "Indeed,
I am too base to trill so blest a tone !"
Would not the King allege
Defaulted consummation of the marriage-pledge,
And hie the Gipsy to her native hedge ?'
'O, too much joy ; O, touch of airy fire ;
O, turmoil of content ; O, unperturb'd desire,
From founts of spirit impell'd through brain and blood !
I'll not call ill what, since 'tis thine, is good,
Nor best what is but second best or third ;
Still my heart fails,
And, unaccustom'd and astonish'd, quails,
And blames me, though I think I have not err'd.
'Tis hard for fly, in such a honied flood,
To use her eyes, far more her wings or feet.
Bitter be thy behests !

Lie like a bunch of myrrh between my aching
breasts.
Some greatly pangful penance would I brave.
Sharpness me save
From being slain by sweet!'
'In your dell'd bosom's double peace
Let all care cease!
Custom's joy-killing breath
Shall bid you sigh full soon for custom-killing
death.
So clasp your childish arms again around my
heart:
'Tis but in such captivity
The unbounded Heav'ns know what they be!
And lie still there,
Till the dawn, threat'ning to declare
My beauty, which you cannot bear,
Bid me depart.
Suffer your soul's delight,
Lest that which is to come wither you quite:
For these are only your espousals; yes,
More intimate and fruitfuller far
Than aptest mortal nuptials are;
But nuptials wait you such as now you dare not
guess.'
'In all I thee obey! And thus I know
That all is well:
Should'st thou me tell
Out of thy warm caress to go
And roll my body in the biting snow,
My very body's joy were but increased;
More pleasant 'tis to please thee than be pleased.
Thy love has conquer'd me; do with me as thou
wilt,
And use me as a chattel that is thine!
Kiss, tread me under foot, cherish or beat,

Sheathe in my heart sharp pain up to the hilt,
Invent what else were most perversely sweet;
Nay, let the Fiend drag me through dens of guilt;
Let Earth, Heav'n, Hell
'Gainst my content combine;
What could make nought the touch that made thee mine!
Ah, say not yet, farewell!'
'Nay, that's the Blackbird's note, the sweet Night's knell.
Behold, Beloved, the penance you would brave!'
'Curs'd when it comes, the bitter thing we crave!
Thou leav'st me now, like to the moon at dawn,
A little, vacuous world alone in air.
I will not care!
When dark comes back my dark shall be withdrawn!
Go free;
For 'tis with me
As when the cup the Child scoops in the sand
Fills, and is part and parcel of the Sea.
I'll say it to myself and understand.
Farewell!
Go as thou wilt and come! Lover divine,
Thou still art jealously and wholly mine;
And this thy kiss
A separate secret by none other scann'd;
Though well I wis
The whole of life is womanhood to thee,
Momently wedded with enormous bliss.
Rainbow, that hast my heaven sudden spann'd,
I am the apple of thy glorious gaze,
Each else life cent'ring to a different blaze;
And, nothing though I be
But now a no more void capacity for thee,

'Tis all to know there's not in air or land
Another for thy Darling quite like me!
Mine arms no more thy restless plumes compel!
Farewell!
Whilst thou art gone, I'll search the weary meads
To deck my bed with lilies of fair deeds!
And, if thou choose to come this eventide,
A touch, my Love, will set my casement wide.
Farewell, farewell!
Be my dull days
Music, at least, with thy remember'd praise!'
'Bitter, sweet, few and veil'd let be
Your songs of me.
Preserving bitter, very sweet,
Few, that so all may be discreet,
And veil'd, that, seeing, none may see.'

XIII

DE NATURA DEORUM.

'Good-morrow, Psyche! What's thine errand
now?
What awful pleasure do thine eyes bespeak,
What shame is in thy childish cheek,
What terror on thy brow?
Is this my Psyche, once so pale and meek?
Thy body's sudden beauty my sight old
Stings, like an agile bead of boiling gold,
And all thy life looks troubled like a tree's
Whose boughs wave many ways in one great
breeze.'
'O Pythoness, to strangest story hark:
A dreadful God was with me in the dark—'
'How many a Maid—
Has never told me that! And thou'rt afraid—'
'He'll come no more,
Or come but twice,
Or thrice,
Or only thrice ten thousand times thrice o'er!'
'For want of wishing thou mean'st not to
miss.
We know the Lover, Psyche, by the kiss!'
'If speech of honey could impart the sweet,
The world were all in tears and at his feet!
But not to tell of that in tears come I, but this:
I'm foolish, weak, and small,

And fear to fall.
If long he stay away, O frightful dream, wise Mother,
What keeps me but that I, gone crazy, kiss some other !'
'The fault were his ! But know,
Sweet little Daughter sad,
He did but feign to go ;
And never more
Shall cross thy window-sill,
Or pass beyond thy door,
Save by thy will.
He's present now in some dim place apart
Of the ivory house wherewith thou mad'st him glad.
Nay, this I whisper thee,
Since none is near,
Or, if one were, since only thou could'st hear,
That happy thing which makes thee flush and start,
Like infant lips in contact with thy heart,
Is He !'
'Yea, this I know, but never can believe !
O, hateful light ! when shall mine own eyes mark
My beauty, which this victory did achieve ?'
'When thou, like Gods and owls, canst see by dark.'
'In vain I cleanse me from all blurring error—'
''Tis the last rub that polishes the mirror.'
'It takes fresh blurr each breath which I respire.'
'Poor Child, don't cry so ! Hold it to the fire.'
'Ah, nought these dints can e'er do out again !'
'Love is not love which does not sweeter live
For having something dreadful to forgive.'
'Sadness and change and pain
Shall me for ever stain ;
For, though my blissful fate

Be for a billion years,
How shall I stop my tears
That life was once so low and Love arrived so late !'
'Sadness is beauty's savour, and pain is
The exceedingly keen edge of bliss ;
Nor, without swift mutation, would the heav'ns be aught.'
'How to behave with him I'd fain be taught.
A maid, meseems, within a God's embrace,
Should bear her like a Goddess, or, at least, a Grace.'
'When Gods, to Man or Maid below,
As men or birds appear,
A kind 'tis of incognito,
And that, not them, is what they choose we should revere.'
'Advise me what oblation vast to bring,
Some least part of my worship to confess !'
'A woman is a little thing,
And in things little lies her comeliness.'
'Must he not soon with mortal tire to toy ? '
'The bashful meeting of strange Depth and Height
Breeds the forever new-born babe, Delight ;
And, as thy God is more than mortal boy,
So bashful more the meeting, and so more the joy.'
'He loves me dearly, but he shakes a whip
Of deathless scorpions at my slightest slip.
Mother, last night he call'd me "Gipsy," so
Roughly it smote me like a blow !
Yet, oh,
I love him, as none surely e'er could love
Our People's pompous but good-natured Jove.
He used to send me stately overture ;
But marriage-bonds, till now, I never could endure !'

'How should great Jove himself do else than miss
To win the woman he forgets to kiss;
Or, won, to keep his favour in her eyes,
If he's too soft or sleepy to chastise!
By Eros, her twain claims are ne'er forgot;
Her wedlock's marr'd when either's miss'd:
Or when she's kiss'd, but beaten not,
Or duly beaten, but not kiss'd.
Ah, Child, the sweet
Content, when we're both kiss'd and beat!
—But whence these wounds? What Demon thee enjoins
To scourge thy shoulders white
And tender loins!'

''Tis nothing, Mother. Happiness at play,
And speech of tenderness no speech can say!'

'How learn'd thou art!
Twelve honeymoons profane had taught thy docile heart
Less than thine Eros, in a summer night!'

'Nay, do not jeer, but help my puzzled plight:
Because he loves so marvellously me,
And I with all he loves in love must be,
How to except myself I do not see.
Yea, now that other vanities are vain,
I'm vain, since him it likes, of being withal
Weak, foolish, small!'

'How can a Maid forget her ornaments!
The Powers, that hopeless doom the proud to die,
Unask'd smile pardon upon vanity,
Nay, praise it, when themselves are praised thereby.'

'Ill-match'd I am for a God's blandishments!
So great, so wise—'

'Gods, in the abstract, are, no doubt, most wise;

But, in the concrete, Girl, they're mysteries!
He's not with thee,
At all less wise nor more
Than human Lover is with her he deigns to adore.
He finds a fair capacity,
And fills it with himself, and glad would die
For that sole She.'
'Know'st thou some potion me awake to keep,
Lest, to the grief of that ne'er-slumbering Bliss,
Disgraced I sleep,
Wearied in soul by his bewildering kiss?'
'The Immortals, Psyche, moulded men from sods
That Maids from them might learn the ways of Gods.
Think, would a wakeful Youth his hard fate weep,
Lock'd to the tired breast of a Bride asleep?'
'Ah, me, I do not dream,
Yet all this does some heathen fable seem!'
'O'ermuch thou mind'st the throne he leaves above!
Between unequals sweet is equal love.'
'Nay, Mother, in his breast, when darkness blinds,
I cannot for my life but talk and laugh
With the large impudence of little minds!'
'Respectful to the Gods and meek,
According to one's lights, I grant
'Twere well to be;
But, on my word,
Child, any one, to hear you speak,
Would take you for a Protestant,
(Such fish I do foresee
When the charm'd fume comes strong on me,)
Or powder'd lackey, by some great man's board,
A deal more solemn than his Lord!

Know'st thou not, Girl, thine Eros loves to laugh?
And shall a God do anything by half?
He foreknew and predestinated all
The Great must pay for kissing things so small,
And ever loves his little Maid the more
The more she makes him laugh.'
'O, Mother, are you sure?'
Gaze steady where yon starless deep the gaze revolts,
And say,
Seest thou a Titan forging thunderbolts,
Or three fair butterflies at lovesome play?
And this I'll add, for succour of thy soul:
Lines parallel meet sooner than some think;
The least part oft is greater than the whole;
And, when you're thirsty, that's the time to drink.'
'Thy sacred words I ponder and revere,
And thank thee heartily that some are clear.'
'Clear speech to men is mostly speech in vain.
Their scope is by themselves so justly scann'd,
They still despise the things they understand;
But, to a pretty Maid like thee, I don't mind speaking plain.'
'Then one boon more to her whom strange Fate mocks
With a wife's duty but no wife's sweet right:
Could I at will but summon my Delight—'
'Thou of thy Jewel art the dainty box;
Thine is the charm which, any time, unlocks;
And this, it seems, thou hitt'st upon last night.
Now go, Child! For thy sake
I've talk'd till this stiff tripod makes my old limbs ache.'

XIV

PSYCHE'S DISCONTENT.

'Enough, enough, ambrosial plumed Boy!
My bosom is aweary of thy breath.
Thou kissest joy
To death.
Have pity of my clay-conceived birth
And maiden's simple mood,
Which longs for ether and infinitude,
As thou, being God, crav'st littleness and earth!
Thou art immortal, thou canst ever toy,
Nor savour less
The sweets of thine eternal childishness,
And hold thy godhead bright in far employ.
Me, to quite other custom life-inured,
Ah, loose from thy caress.
'Tis not to be endured!
Undo thine arms and let me see the sky,
By this infatuating flame obscured.
O, I should feel thee nearer to my heart
If thou and I
Shone each to each respondently apart,
Like stars which one the other trembling spy,
Distinct and lucid in extremes of air.
O, hear me pray——'
'Be prudent in thy prayer!
A God is bond to her who is wholly his,

And, should she ask amiss,
He may not her beseeched harm deny.'
'Not yet, not yet!
'Tis still high day, and half my toil's to do.
How can I toil, if thus thou dost renew
Toil's guerdon, which the daytime should forget?
The long, long night, when none can work for fear,
Sweet fear incessantly consummated,
My most divinely Dear,
My Joy, my Dread,
Will soon be here!
Not, Eros, yet!
I ask, for Day, the use which is the Wife's:
To bear, apart from thy delight and thee,
The fardel coarse of customary life's
Exceeding injucundity.
Leave me awhile, that I may shew thee clear
How Goddess-like thy love has lifted me;
How, seeming lone upon the gaunt, lone shore,
I'll trust thee near,
When thou'rt, to knowledge of my heart, no more
Than a dream's heed
Of lost joy track'd in scent of the sea-weed!
Leave me to pluck the incomparable flower
Of frailty lion-like fighting in thy name and power;
To make thee laugh, in thy safe heaven, to see
With what grip fell
I'll cling to hope when life draws hard to hell,
Yea, cleave to thee when me thou seem'st to slay,
Haply, at close of some most cruel day,
To find myself in thy reveal'd arms clasp'd,
Just when I say,
My feet have slipp'd at last!
But, lo, while thus I store toil's slow increase,
To be my dower, in patience and in peace,

Thou com'st, like bolt from blue, invisibly,
With premonition none nor any sign,
And, at a gasp, no choice nor fault of mine,
Possess'd I am with thee
Ev'n as a sponge is by a surge of the sea !'
'Thus irresistibly by Love embraced
Is she who boasts her more than mortal chaste !'
'Find'st thou me worthy, then, by day and night,
But of this fond indignity, delight ?'
'Little, bold Femininity,
That darest blame Heaven, what would'st thou have or be ?'
'Shall I, the gnat which dances in thy ray,
Dare to be reverent ? Therefore dare I say,
I cannot guess the good that I desire ;
But this I know, I spurn the gifts which Hell
Can mock till which is which 'tis hard to tell.
I love thee, God ; yea, and 'twas such assault
As this which made me thine ; if that be fault ;
But I, thy Mistress, merit should thine ire
If aught so little, transitory and low
As this which made me thine
Should hold me so.'
'Little to thee, my Psyche, is this, but much to me !'
'Ah, if, my God, that be !'
'Yea, Palate fine,
That claim'st for thy proud cup the pearl of price,
And scorn'st the wine,
Accept the sweet, and say 'tis sacrifice !
Sleep, Centre to the tempest of my love,
And dream thereof,
And keep the smile which sleeps within thy face
Like sunny eve in some forgotten place !'

XV

PAIN.

O, Pain, Love's mystery,
Close next of kin
To joy and heart's delight,
Low Pleasure's opposite,
Choice food of sanctity
And medicine of sin,
Angel, whom even they that will pursue
Pleasure with hell's whole gust
Find that they must
Perversely woo,
My lips, thy live coal touching, speak thee true.
Thou sear'st my flesh, O Pain,
But brand'st for arduous peace my languid brain,
And bright'nest my dull view,
Till I, for blessing, blessing give again,
And my roused spirit is
Another fire of bliss,
Wherein I learn
Feelingly how the pangful, purging fire
Shall furiously burn
With joy, not only of assured desire,
But also present joy
Of seeing the life's corruption, stain by stain,
Vanish in the clear heat of Love irate,
And, fume by fume, the sick alloy
Of luxury, sloth and hate

Evaporate ;
Leaving the man, so dark erewhile,
The mirror merely of God's smile.
Herein, O Pain, abides the praise
For which my song I raise ;
But even the bastard good of intermittent ease
How greatly doth it please !
With what repose
The being from its bright exertion glows,
When from thy strenuous storm the senses sweep
Into a little harbour deep
Of rest ;
When thou, O Pain,
Having devour'd the nerves that thee sustain,
Sleep'st, till thy tender food be somewhat grown again ;
And how the lull
With tear-blind love is full !
What mockery of a man am I express'd
That I should wait for thee
To woo !
Nor even dare to love, till thou lov'st me.
How shameful, too,
Is this :
That, when thou lov'st, I am at first afraid
Of thy fierce kiss,
Like a young maid ;
And only trust thy charms
And get my courage in thy throbbing arms.
And, when thou partest, what a fickle mind
Thou leav'st behind,
That, being a little absent from mine eye,
It straight forgets thee what thou art,
And ofttimes my adulterate heart
Dallies with Pleasure, thy pale enemy.

O, for the learned spirit without attaint
That does not faint,
But knows both how to have thee and to lack,
And ventures many a spell,
Unlawful but for them that love so well,
To call thee back.

XVI

PROPHETS WHO CANNOT SING.

Ponder, ye Just, the scoffs that frequent go
From forth the foe:
'The holders of the Truth in Verity
Are people of a harsh and stammering tongue!
The hedge-flower hath its song;
Meadow and tree,
Water and wandering cloud
Find Seers who see,
And, with convincing music clear and loud,
Startle the adder-deafness of the crowd
By tones, O Love, from thee.
Views of the unveil'd heavens alone forth bring
Prophets who cannot sing,
Praise that in chiming numbers will not run;
At least, from David until Dante, none,
And none since him.
Fish, and not swim?
They think they somehow should, and so they try;
But (haply 'tis they screw the pitch too high)
'Tis still their fates
To warble tunes that nails might draw from slates.
Poor Seraphim!
They mean to spoil our sleep, and do, but all their gains
Are curses for their pains!'
Now who but knows

That truth to learn from foes
Is wisdom ripe?
Therefore no longer let us stretch our throats
Till hoarse as frogs
With straining after notes
Which but to touch would burst an organ-pipe.
Far better be dumb dogs.

XVII

THE CHILD'S PURCHASE.

A PROLOGUE.

As a young Child, whose Mother, for a jest,
To his own use a golden coin flings down,
Devises blythe how he may spend it best,
Or on a horse, a bride-cake, or a crown,
Till, wearied with his quest,
Nor liking altogether that nor this,
He gives it back for nothing but a kiss,
Endow'd so I
With golden speech, my choice of toys to buy,
And scanning power and pleasure and renown,
Till each in turn, with looking at, looks vain,
For her mouth's bliss,
To her who gave it give I it again.
Ah, Lady elect,
Whom the Time's scorn has saved from its respect,
Would I had art
For uttering this which sings within my heart!
But, lo,
Thee to admire is all the art I know.
My Mother and God's; Fountain of miracle!
Give me thereby some praise of thee to tell
In such a Song
As may my Guide severe and glad not wrong

Who never spake till thou'dst on him conferr'd
The right, convincing word!
Grant me the steady heat
Of thought wise, splendid, sweet,
Urged by the great, rejoicing wind that rings
With draught of unseen wings,
Making each phrase, for love and for delight,
Twinkle like Sirius on a frosty night!
Aid thou thine own dear fame, thou only Fair,
At whose petition meek
The Heavens themselves decree that, as it were,
They will be weak!
Thou Speaker of all wisdom in a Word,
Thy Lord!
Speaker who thus could'st well afford
Thence to be silent;—ah, what silence that
Which had for prologue thy 'Magnificat?'—
O, Silence full of wonders
More than by Moses in the Mount were heard,
More than were utter'd by the Seven Thunders;
Silence that crowns, unnoted, like the voiceless blue,
The loud world's varying view,
And in its holy heart the sense of all things ponders!
That acceptably I may speak of thee,
Ora pro me!
Key-note and stop
Of the thunder-going chorus of sky-Powers;
Essential drop
Distill'd from worlds of sweetest-savour'd flowers
To anoint with nuptial praise
The Head which for thy Beauty doff'd its rays,
And thee, in His exceeding glad descending, meant,
And Man's new days
Made of His deed the adorning accident!
Vast Nothingness of Self, fair female Twin
Of Fulness, sucking all God's glory in!

(Ah, Mistress mine,
To nothing I have added only sin,
And yet would shine !)
Ora pro me !
Life's cradle and death's tomb !
To lie within whose womb,
There, with divine self-will infatuate,
Love-captive to the thing He did create,
Thy God did not abhor,
No more
Than Man, in Youth's high spousal-tide,
Abhors at last to touch
The strange lips of his long-procrastinating Bride ;
Nay, not the least imagined part as much !
Ora pro me !
My Lady, yea, the Lady of my Lord,
Who didst the first descry
The burning secret of virginity,
We know with what reward !
Prism whereby
Alone we see
Heav'n's light in its triplicity ;
Rainbow complex
In bright distinction of all beams of sex,
Shining for aye
In the simultaneous sky,
To One, thy Husband, Father, Son, and Brother,
Spouse blissful, Daughter, Sister, milk-sweet
Mother ;
Ora pro me !
Mildness, whom God obeys, obeying thyself
Him in thy joyful Saint, nigh lost to sight
In the great gulf
Of his own glory and thy neighbour light ;
With whom thou wast as else with husband none
For perfect fruit of inmost amity ;

Who felt for thee
Such rapture of refusal that no kiss
Ever seal'd wedlock so conjoint with bliss;
And whose good singular eternally
Tis now, with nameless peace and vehemence,
To enjoy thy married smile,
That mystery of innocence;
Ora pro me!
Sweet Girlhood without guile,
The extreme of God's creative energy;
Sunshiny Peak of human personality;
The world's sad aspirations' one Success;
Bright Blush, that sav'st our shame from shamelessness;
Chief Stone of stumbling; Sign built in the way
To set the foolish everywhere a-bray;
Hem of God's robe, which all who touch are heal'd;
To which the outside Many honour yield
With a reward and grace
Unguess'd by the unwash'd boor that hails Him to His face,
Spurning the safe, ingratiant courtesy
Of suing Him by thee;
Ora pro me!
Creature of God rather the sole than first;
Knot of the cord
Which binds together all and all unto their Lord;
Suppliant Omnipotence; best to the worst;
Our only Saviour from an abstract Christ
And Egypt's brick-kilns, where the lost crowd plods,
Blaspheming its false Gods;
Peace-beaming Star, by which shall come enticed,
Though nought thereof as yet they weet,
Unto thy Babe's small feet,
The Mighty, wand'ring disemparadised,

Like Lucifer, because to thee
They will not bend the knee ;
Ora pro me !
Desire of Him whom all things else desire !
Bush aye with Him as He with thee on fire !
Neither in His great Deed nor on His throne—
O, folly of Love, the intense
Last culmination of Intelligence,—
Him seem'd it good that God should be alone !
Basking in unborn laughter of thy lips,
Ere the world was, with absolute delight
His Infinite reposed in thy Finite ;
Well-match'd : He, universal being's Spring,
And thou, in whom are gather'd up the ends of everything !
Ora pro me !
In season due, on His sweet-fearful bed,
Rock'd by an earthquake, curtain'd with eclipse,
Thou shar'd'st the rapture of the sharp spear's head,
And thy bliss pale
Wrought for our boon what Eve's did for our bale ;
Thereafter, holding a little thy soft breath,
Thou underwent'st the ceremony of death ;
And, now, Queen-Wife,
Sitt'st at the right hand of the Lord of Life,
Who, of all bounty, craves for only fee
The glory of hearing it besought with smiles by thee !
Ora pro me !
Mother, who lead'st me still by unknown ways,
Giving the gifts I know not how to ask,
Bless thou the work
Which, done, redeems my many wasted days,
Makes white the murk,
And crowns the few which thou wilt not dispraise.
When clear my Songs of Lady's graces rang,
And little guess'd I 'twas of thee I sang !

Vainly, till now, my pray'rs would thee compel
To fire my verse with thy shy fame, too long
Shunning world-blazon of well-ponder'd song;
But doubtful smiles, at last, 'mid thy denials lurk;
From which I spell,
'Humility and greatness grace the task
Which he who does it deems impossible!'

XVIII

DEAD LANGUAGE.

'Thou dost not wisely, Bard.
A double voice is Truth's, to use at will:
One, with the abysmal scorn of good for ill,
Smiting the brutish ear with doctrine hard,
Wherein She strives to look as near a lie
As can comport with her divinity;
The other tender-soft as seem
The embraces of a dead Love in a dream.
These thoughts, which you have sung
In the vernacular,
Should be, as others of the Church's are,
Decently cloak'd in the Imperial Tongue.
Have you no fears
Lest, as Lord Jesus bids your sort to dread,
Yon acorn-munchers rend you limb from limb,
You, with Heaven's liberty affronting theirs!'
So spoke my monitor; but I to him,
'Alas, and is not mine a language dead?'

AMELIA,

TAMERTON CHURCH-TOWER, ETC.

AMELIA.

WHENE'ER mine eyes do my Amelia greet
It is with such emotion
As when, in childhood, turning a dim street,
I first beheld the ocean.
There, where the little, bright, surf-breathing
town,
That shew'd me first her beauty and the sea,
Gathers its skirts against the gorse-lit down
And scatters gardens o'er the southern lea,
Abides this Maid
Within a kind, yet sombre Mother's shade,
Who of her daughter's graces seems almost afraid,
Viewing them ofttimes with a scared forecast,
Caught, haply, from obscure love-peril past.
Howe'er that be,
She scants me of my right,
Is cunning careful evermore to balk
Sweet separate talk,
And fevers my delight
By frets, if, on Amelia's cheek of peach,
I touch the notes which music cannot reach,
Bidding 'Good-night!'
Wherefore it came that, till to-day's dear date,
I curs'd the weary months which yet I have to
wait
Ere I find heaven, one-nested with my mate.
To-day, the Mother gave,

To urgent pleas and promise to behave
As she were there, her long-besought consent
To trust Amelia with me to the grave
Where lay my once-betrothed, Millicent :
'For,' said she, hiding ill a moistening eye,
'Though, Sir, the word sounds hard,
God makes as if He least knew how to guard
The treasure He loves best, simplicity.'
And there Amelia stood, for fairness shewn
Like a young apple-tree, in flush'd array
Of white and ruddy flow'r, auroral, gay,
With chilly blue the maiden branch between ;
And yet to look on her moved less the mind
To say 'How beauteous!' than 'How good and kind!'
And so we went alone
By walls o'er which the lilac's numerous plume
Shook down perfume ;
Trim plots close blown
With daisies, in conspicuous myriads seen,
Engross'd each one
With single ardour for her spouse, the sun ;
Garths in their glad array
Of white and ruddy branch, auroral, gay,
With azure chill the maiden flow'r between ;
Meadows of fervid green,
With sometime sudden prospect of untold
Cowslips, like chance-found gold ;
And broadcast buttercups at joyful gaze,
Rending the air with praise,
Like the six-hundred-thousand-voiced shout
Of Jacob camp'd in Midian put to rout ;
Then through the Park,
Where Spring to livelier gloom
Quicken'd the cedars dark,
And, 'gainst the clear sky cold,

Which shone afar
Crowded with sunny alps oracular,
Great chestnuts raised themselves abroad like
cliffs of bloom;
And everywhere,
Amid the ceaseless rapture of the lark,
With wonder new
We caught the solemn voice of single air,
'Cuckoo!'
And when Amelia, 'bolden'd, saw and heard
How bravely sang the bird,
And all things in God's bounty did rejoice,
She who, her Mother by, spake seldom word,
Did her charm'd silence doff,
And, to my happy marvel, her dear voice
Went as a clock does, when the pendulum's off.
Ill Monarch of man's heart the Maiden who
Does not aspire to be High-Pontiff too!
So she repeated soft her Poet's line,
'By grace divine,
Not otherwise, O Nature, are we thine!'
And I, up the bright steep she led me, trod,
And the like thought pursued
With, 'What is gladness without gratitude,
And where is gratitude without a God?'
And of delight, the guerdon of His laws,
She spake, in learned mood;
And I, of Him loved reverently, as Cause,
Her sweetly, as Occasion of all good.
Nor were we shy,
For souls in heaven that be
May talk of heaven without hypocrisy.
And now, when we drew near
The low, gray Church, in its sequester'd dell,
A shade upon me fell.
Dead Millicent indeed had been most sweet,

But I how little meet
To call such graces in a Maiden mine!
A boy's proud passion free affection blunts;
His well-meant flatteries oft are blind affronts;
And many a tear
Was Millicent's before I, manlier, knew
That maidens shine
As diamonds do,
Which, though most clear,
Are not to be seen through;
And, if she put her virgin self aside
And sate her, crownless, at my conquering feet,
It should have bred in me humility, not pride.
Amelia had more luck than Millicent:
Secure she smiled and warm from all mischance
Or from my knowledge or my ignorance,
And glow'd content
With my—some might have thought too much—
superior age,
Which seem'd the gage
Of steady kindness all on her intent.
Thus nought forebade us to be fully blent.
While, therefore, now
Her pensive footstep stirr'd
The darnell'd garden of unheedful death,
She ask'd what Millicent was like, and heard
Of eyes like her's, and honeysuckle breath,
And of a wiser than a woman's brow,
Yet fill'd with only woman's love, and how
An incidental greatness character'd
Her unconsider'd ways.
But all my praise
Amelia thought too slight for Millicent,
And on my lovelier-freighted arm she leant,
For more attent;
And the tea-rose I gave,

To deck her breast, she dropp'd upon the grave.
'And this was her's,' said I, decoring with a band
Of mildest pearls Amelia's milder hand.
'Nay, I will wear it for *her* sake,' she said:
For dear to maidens are their rivals dead.
And so,
She seated on the black yew's tortured root,
I on the carpet of sere shreds below,
And nigh the little mound where lay that other,
I kiss'd her lips three times without dispute,
And, with bold worship suddenly aglow,
I lifted to my lips a sandall'd foot,
And kiss'd it three times thrice without dispute.
Upon my head her fingers fell like snow,
Her lamb-like hands about my neck she wreathed.
Her arms like slumber o'er my shoulders crept,
And with her bosom, whence the azalea breathed,
She did my face full favourably smother,
To hide the heaving secret that she wept!
Now would I keep my promise to her Mother;
Now I arose, and raised her to her feet,
My best Amelia, fresh-born from a kiss,
Moth-like, full-blown in birthdew shuddering sweet,
With great, kind eyes, in whose brown shade
Bright Venus and her Baby play'd!
At inmost heart well pleased with one another,
What time the slant sun low
Through the plough'd field does each clod sharply shew,
And softly fills
With shade the dimples of our homeward hills,
With little said,
We left the 'wilder'd garden of the dead,
And gain'd the gorse-lit shoulder of the down
That keeps the north-wind from the nestling town,
And caught, once more, the vision of the wave,

Where, on the horizon's dip,
A many-sailed ship
Pursued alone her distant purpose grave;
And, by steep steps rock-hewn, to the dim street
I led her sacred feet;
And so the Daughter gave,
Soft, moth-like, sweet,
Showy as damask-rose and shy as musk,
Back to her Mother, anxious in the dusk.
And now 'Good-night!'
Me shall the phantom months no more affright.
For heaven's gates to open well waits he
Who keeps himself the key.

L'ALLEGRO.

Felicity!
Who ope'st to none that knocks, yet, laughing weak,
Yield'st all to Love that will not seek,
And who, though won, wilt droop and die,
Unless wide doors bespeak thee free,
How safe's the bond of thee and me,
Since thee I cherish and defy!
Is't Love or Friendship, Dearest, we obey?
Ah, thou art young, and I am gray;
But happy man is he who knows
How well time goes,
With no unkind intruder by,
Between such friends as thou and I!
'Twould wrong thy favour, Sweet, were I to say,
'Tis best by far,
When best things are not possible,
To make the best of those that are;
For, though it be not May,
Sure, few delights of Spring excel
The beauty of this mild September day!
So with me walk,
And view the dreaming field and bossy Autumn wood,
And how in humble russet goes
The Spouse of Honour, fair Repose,
Far from a world whence love is fled
And truth is dying because joy is dead;
And, if we hear the roaring wheel
Of God's remoter service, public zeal,

Let us to stiller place retire
And glad admire
How, near Him, sounds of working cease
In little fervour and much peace;
And let us talk
Of holy things in happy mood,
Learnt of thy blest twin-sister, Certitude;
Or let's about our neighbours chat,
Well praising this, less praising that,
And judging outer strangers by
Those gentle and unsanction'd lines
To which remorse of equity
Of old hath moved the School divines.
Or linger where this willow bends,
And let us, till the melody be caught,
Harken that sudden, singing thought,
On which unguess'd increase to life perchance depends.
He ne'er hears twice the same who hears
The songs of heaven's unanimous spheres,
And this may be the song to make, at last, amends
For many sighs and boons in vain long sought!
Now, careless, let us stray, or stop
To see the partridge from the covey drop,
Or, while the evening air's like yellow wine,
From the pure stream take out
The playful trout,
That jerks with rasping check the struggled line;
Or to the Farm, where, high on trampled stacks,
The labourers stir themselves amain
To feed with hasty sheaves of grain
The deaf'ning engine's boisterous maw,
And snatch again,
From to-and-fro tormenting racks,
The toss'd and hustled straw;
Whilst others tend the shedded wheat

That fills yon row of shuddering sacks,
Or shift them quick, and bind them neat,
And dogs and boys with sticks
Wait, murderous, for the rats that leave the ruin'd ricks;
And, all the bags being fill'd and rank'd fivefold, they pour
The treasure on the barn's clean floor,
And take them back for more,
Until the whole bared harvest beauteous lies
Under our pleased and prosperous eyes.
Then let us give our idlest hour
To the world's wisdom and its power;
Hear famous Golden-Tongue refuse
To gander sauce that's good for goose,
Or the great Clever Party con
How many grains of sifted sand,
Heap'd, make a likely house to stand,
How many fools one Solomon.
Science, beyond all other lust
Endow'd with appetite for dust,
We glance at where it grunts, well-sty'd,
And pass upon the other side.
Pass also by, in pensive mood,
Taught by thy kind twin-sister, Certitude,
Yon puzzled crowd, whose tired intent
Hunts like a pack without a scent.
And now come home,
Where none of our mild days
Can fail, though simple, to confess
The magic of mysteriousness;
For there 'bide charming Wonders three,
Besides, Sweet, thee,
To comprehend whose commonest ways,
Ev'n could that be,
Were coward's 'vantage and no true man's praise.

TAMERTON CHURCH-TOWER;

OR,

FIRST LOVE.

I

1

WE left the Church at Tamerton
In gloomy western air;
To greet the day we gallop'd on,
A merry-minded pair.
The hazy East hot noon did bode;
Our horses snuff'd the dawn;
We made ten Cornish miles of road
Before the dew was gone.
We clomb the hill where Lanson's Keep
Fronts Dartmoor's distant ridge;
Thence trotted South; walk'd down the steep
That slants to Gresson Bridge;
And paused awhile, where Tamar waits,
In many a shining coil,
And teeming Devon separates
From Cornwall's sorry soil.

2

Our English skies contain'd, that Spring,
A Caribbean sun;
The singing birds forgot to sing,
The rivulets to run.

For three noons past, the skies had frown'd,
Obscured with blighting shades
That only mock'd the thirsty ground
And unrejoicing glades.
To-day, before the noon was nigh,
Bright-skirted vapours grew,
And on the sky hung languidly;
The sky was languid too.
Our horses dropp'd their necks, and nosed
The dusty wayside grass,
Whilst we beneath still boughs reposed
And watch'd the water pass.
We spoke of plighted Bertha: Frank
Shot pebbles in the stream;
And I lay by him on the bank,
But dreamt no lover's dream.
She was a blythe and bashful maid,
Much blushing in her glee;
Yet gracing all she did and said
With sweet sufficiency.
'Is Blanche as fair?' ask'd I, who yearn'd
To feel my life complete;
To taste unselfish pleasures earn'd
By service strict and sweet.
'Well, some say fairer: she'll surprise
Your heart with crimson lips;
Fat underlids, that hold bright eyes
In laughing half-eclipse;
Alluring locks, done up with taste
Behind her dainty ears;
And manners full of wayward haste,
Tho' facile as the deer's.'

3

'You paint a leaflet, here and there;
And not the blossom: tell

What mysteries of good and fair
These blazon'd letters spell.'

4

'Her mouth and teeth, by Cupid's bow!
Are letters spelling "kiss;"
And, witchingly withdrawn below
Twin worlds of baby-bliss,
Her waist, so soft and small, may mean,
"O, when will some one come
To make me catch my breath between
His finger and his thumb!"'

5

My life, 'twas like a land of dreams,
Where nothing noble throve:
Dull seem'd it as to maiden seems
The verse that's not of love.
'See where,' sigh'd I, 'the water dim
Repeats, with leaden hue,
The fervid sun, the cloud's hot rim,
The gap of dazzling blue!'
Quoth Frank, 'I do, and thence foresee
And all too plainly scan
Some sentimental homily
On Duty, Death, or Man.'
''Tis this;' said I, 'our senses mar,
Ev'n so, sweet Nature's face,
Unless by love revived they are,
Or lit by heavenly grace.
Below the hazel talks the rill;
My heart speaks not again;
The solemn cloud, the stately hill,
I look on each in vain.
Sure he for whom no Power shall strike
This darkness into day—'

'Is damn'd,' said Frank, who morall'd like
The Fool in an old Play.
'That's true!' cried I, 'yet, as the worm
That sickens ere it change—'
'Or as the pup that nears the term
At which pups have the mange—
Pooh! Come, Man, let us on,' he said,
'For now the storm is nigh!'
And whilst we rode quaint sense we read
Within the changing sky.
Above us bent a prophet wild,
Pointing to hidden harm;
Beyond, a magic woman smiled,
And wove some wondrous charm;
Past that, a censer jetted smoke:
Black convolutions roll'd
Sunwards, and caught the light, and broke
In crowns of shining gold.

6

The gaps of blue shrank fast in span;
The long-forgotten breeze,
By lazy starts and fits, began
To stir the higher trees.
At noon, we came to Tavistock;
And sunshine still was there,
But gloomy Dartmoor seem'd to mock
Its weak and yellow glare.
The swallows, in the wrathful light,
Were pitching up and down;
A string of rooks made rapid flight,
Due southward, o'er the town,
Where, baiting at the Tiger-Inn,
We talk'd by windows wide,
Of Blanche and all my unseen kin,
Who did our coming bide.

7

The heavy sign-board swung and shriek'd,
In dark air whirl'd the vane,
Blinds flapp'd, dust rose, and, straining, creak'd
The shaken window-pane;
And, just o'erhead, a huge cloud flung,
For earnest of its stores,
A few calm drops, that struck among
The light-leaved sycamores.
Hot to be gone, Frank rose and eyed
Dark cloud and swinging branch;
But less long'd he to greet his Bride,
Than I to look on Blanche.
Her name, pair'd still with praise at home,
Would make my pulses start;
The hills between us were become
A weight upon my heart.
'Behold,' I cried, 'the storm comes not;
The northern heavens grow fair.'
'Look South,' said Frank, ''tis one wide blot
Of thunder-threatening air.'
The string of rooks had travell'd on,
Against the southern shroud,
And, like some snaky skeleton,
Lay twisted in the cloud.
'No storm to-day!' said I, 'for, see,
Yon black thing travels south.'
We follow'd soon; our spirits free,
Our bodies slaked from drouth.
I rode in silence; Frank, with tongue
Made lax by too much port,
Soliloquising, said or sung
After this tipsy sort:

'Yea, nerves they are the Devil's mesh,
And pups begin quite blind,

And health is ofttimes in the flesh,
And measles in the mind!

'Foolish and fair was Joan without;
Foolish and foul within;
High as a hunted pig his snout,
She carried a foolish chin.

'The Boy beheld, and brisk rose he
At this badly painted fly:
That boys less wise than fish will be
Makes many a man to sigh.'

8

On, on we toil'd, amidst the blaze
From Dartmoor's ridges bare;
Beneath the hush'd and scorching haze,
And through the twinkling air;
Along the endless mountain-side,
That seem'd with us to move;
Past dreary mine-mouths, far and wide;
Huge dross-heap, wheel, and groove;
Dark towns by disembowell'd hills,
Where swarthy tribes abode,
Who, in hard rocks with harder wills,
Pursued the crooked lode;
Up heights, that seem'd against us match'd;
Until, from table-land,
Before the teasing midge was hatch'd,
We hail'd the southern strand.
Then pleasantly, on level ground
And through the lighter air,
We paced along and breathed around,
A merry-minded pair.
A western night of even cloud
Suck'd in the sultry disk;

Bright racks look'd on, a fiery crowd,
To seamen boding risk;
The late crow wing'd his silent way
Across the shadowy East;
The gnat danced out his little day,
His ceaseless singing ceased;
Along the dim horizon round
Fled faint electric fires;
Blue glow-worms lit the fresher ground
By moisture-harbouring briers;
Far northward twinkled lonely lights,
The peopled vales among;
In front, between the gaping heights,
The mystic ocean hung.

9

Our weary spirits flagg'd beneath
The still and loaded air;
We left behind the freër heath,
A moody-minded pair.
With senses slack and sick of mirth,
Tho' near the happy goal,
I murmur'd, fearing nought on earth
Could quite content the soul:
'Suppose your love prove such a light
As yonder glow-worm's lamp,
That gleams, at distance, strong and bright,
Approach'd, burns weak and damp.
Perchance, by much of bliss aroused,
Your heart will pant for more;
And then the worm of want lies housed
Within the sweet fruit's core!
Far worse, if, led by fancy blind,
But undeceiv'd by use—'
'I dream,' yawn'd Frank, 'and wake to find
My Goddess a green goose!'

'Vain, vain,' said I, 'is worldly weal:
We faint, within the heart,
For good which all we see and feel
Foreshadows but in part.'
Frank answer'd, 'What you faint for, win!
Faint not, but forward press.
Heav'n proffers all: 'twere grievous sin
To live content in less.
The Sun rolls by us every day;
And it and all things speak
To the sinking heart of man, and say,
'Tis wicked to be weak.
We would not hear the hated sound;
But, by the Lord, we must:
If not, the heavy world goes round,
And grinds us into dust.'
With each a moral in his mouth,
We rein'd our sweating nags,
Where quiet Ocean, on the South,
Kiss'd Edgecumb's ruddy crags.

II

1

So subtly love within me wrought,
So excellent she seem'd,
Daily of Blanche was all my thought,
Nightly of Blanche I dream'd;
And this was all my wish, and all
The work now left for life,
To make this Wonder mine, to call
This laughing Blanche my Wife.

2

I courted her till hope grew bold;
Then sought her in her place,

And all my passion freely told,
Before her blushing face.
I kiss'd her twice, I kiss'd her thrice,
Thro' tresses and thro' tears;
I kiss'd her lips, I kiss'd her eyes,
And calm'd her joys and fears.
So woo'd I Blanche, and so I sped,
And so, with small delay,
I and the patient Frank were wed
Upon the self-same day.
And friends all round kiss'd either Bride,
I Frank's, Frank mine; and he
Laugh'd as for once we thus defied
Love's sweet monopoly.
And then we drove by garth and grove;
And soon forgot the place
Where all the world had look'd shy Love
So rudely in the face.

III

I

The noon was hot and close and still,
When, steadying Blanche's hand,
I led her down the southern hill,
And row'd with her from land.
Ere summer's prime that year the wasp
Lay gorged within the peach;
The tide, as though the sea did gasp,
Fell lax upon the beach.
Quietly dipp'd the dripping scull,
And all beside was calm;
But o'er the strange and weary lull
No angel waved his palm.
The sun was rayless, pale the sky,
The distance thick with light:

We glided past the fort and by
The war-ship's sleeping might.
Her paddle stirr'd: without a breeze,
A mimic tempest boil'd:
The sailors on the silent seas
With storm-tuned voices toil'd.
I could not toil; I seldom pray'd:
What was to do or ask?
Love's purple glory round me play'd,
Unfed by prayer or task.
All perfect my contentment was,
For Blanche was all my care;
And heaven seem'd only heaven because
My goddess would be there.
No wafted breeze the ships did strike,
No wish unwon moved me;
The peace within my soul was like
The peace upon the sea.
At times, when action sleeps, unstirr'd
By any motive gale,
A mystic wind, with warning heard,
Ruffles life's idle sail.
The fancy, then, a fear divines,
And, borne on gloomy wings,
Sees threats and formidable signs
In simply natural things.
It smote my heart, how, yesternight,
The moon rose in eclipse,
And how her maim'd and shapeless light
O'erhung the senseless ships.
The passion pass'd, as, lightning-lit,
Red cloud-scenes shew and close;
And soon came wonder at the fit,
And smiles and full repose.
Again I turn'd me, all devote,
To my sweet Idol's shrine;

Again I gazed where, on the boat,
Her shadow mix'd with mine.

2

Cried Frank, who, with his Wife, was there,
'We dream! sing each a song.'
And he sang first an old, brave air,
And pull'd the boat along:

'Sir Pelles woo'd, in scorn's despite;
He cherish'd love's sweet smart;
Ettarde proved light; then, like a Knight,
He turn'd her from his heart.

'O, the remorse with which we pay
For duties done too well!
But conscience gay does grief allay;
As all true knights can tell.'

3

'Alas, poor Knight!' cried Blanche. 'Nay hear,'
Said Frank, 'the saddest half!'
And drearily he troll'd, while clear
Rose Blanche's puzzled laugh.

'Sir Lob was drunk; the stars were bright.
Within an empty ditch,
Sir Lob all night lay right and tight
As a Saint within his niche.

'Now, well, quoth he, goes life with me;
I've liquor and to spare;
I hate the herd that vulgar be;
And, O, the stars are fair!

'The mill-dam burst: Sir Lob lay sunk
In that celestial swound:
The mill-stream found the knight dead drunk,
And the Jury found him drown'd.'

4

'The tunes are good; the words,' said I,
'Are hard to understand.'
And soon I prefaced with a sigh
This pagan love-song grand:

'When Love's bright Ichor fills the veins,
Love's Amaranth lights the brow,
The Past grows dark, the Future wanes,
Before the golden Now.

'Marc Antony the war-flags furl'd,
For Egypt's Queen said, "Stay:"
He reck'd not of the worthless world,
Well lost by that delay.

'Quoth Antony, Here set I up
My everlasting rest:
Leave me to drain Joy's magic cup,
To dream on Egypt's breast.'

5

Frank smiled, and said my note was wrong;
'Twas neither Man's nor Boy's;
And Blanche sang next, some modern song,
Of 'Flowers' and 'Fairy Joys.'
As bright disparted skies that break
To let a cherub through,
So seem'd her mouth: my sight did ache,
Glitt'ring with fiery dew;

And, in the laugh of her brown eye,
My heart, contented so,
Lay like the honey-thirsty fly
Drows'd in the cactus' glow.
Nor heeded I what sang my Saint,
Such magic had the sound.
The myrtle in her breath made faint
The air that hearken'd round.

6

'Now, Wife,' said Frank, 'to shame our lays,
Try you in turn your power;
And sing your little song in praise
Of Love's selectest flower.'
Her hand felt his: thus sang she then,
Submitted to his rule,
Tho' shyer than the water-hen
On Tamar's shadiest pool.

'The Myrtle sates with scent the air
That flows by Grecian hills;
Its fervid leaflets glisten fair
By warm Italian rills.
The North too has its Lover's-Flower,
The glad Forget-me-not;
Too bold thro' sunshine, wind, and shower,
Too blue to be forgot.'

7

Pointing far East, Frank said, 'Do you see
Yon porpoise-droves at play?'
We gazed, and saw, with failing glee,
Bright lines of spotted spray.
Once more the boded terror shook
My heart, and made me dumb.

'To land! to land!' cried Frank, 'for, look,
The storm, at last, is come!'
Above us, heated fields of mist
Precipitated cloud;
For shore we pull'd; the swift keel hiss'd;
Above us grew the shroud.
The pale gull flapp'd the stagnant air;
The thunder-drop fell straight;
The first wind lifted Blanche's hair;
Looking to me she sate.
Across the boundless mirror crept,
In dark'ning blasts, the squall;
And round our terror lightly leapt
Mad wavelets, many and small.
The oars cast by, convuls'd outflew
Our perilous hope the sail.
None spoke; all watch'd the waves, that grew
Under the splashing hail.
With urgent hearts and useless hands,
We sate and saw them rise,
Coursing to shore in gloomy bands,
Below the appalling skies.
The wrathful thunder scared the deeps,
And where, upon our wake,
The sea got up in ghastly heaps,
White lines of lightning strake.
On, on, with fainting hope we fled,
Hard-hunted by the grave;
Slow seem'd it, though like wind we sped
Over the shouldering wave;
In front swift rose the crags, where still
A storm of sunshine pour'd;
At last, beneath the southern hill,
The pitiless breakers roar'd.
O, bolt foreseen before it burst!
O, chastening hard to bear!

O, cup of sweetness quite revers'd,
And turn'd to void despair!
Blanche in fear swooning, I let go
The helm; we struck the ground;
The sea fell in from stern to prow,
And Blanche, my Bride, was drown'd.
What guilt was hers? But God is great,
And all that may be known
To each of any other's fate
Is, that it helps his own.

IV.

I

In a swift vortex go the years,
Each swifter than the last,
And seasons four their set careers
Pursued, and somehow pass'd.
The spirit of Spring, this year, was quench'd
With clouds and wind and rain;
All night the gust-blown torrent drench'd
The gloomy window-pane;
Against the pane the flapping blind
Flapp'd ever, dismally;
And ever, above the rain and wind,
Sounded the dismal sea.
The billows, like some guilty crew
Devour'd by vain remorse,
Dash'd up the beach, sighing withdrew,
And mix'd, with murmurs hoarse.
The morning was a cheerless sight,
Amongst the turbid skies;
But sweet was the relief of light
Within my restless eyes;
For then I rose to prayer and toil,
Forgat the ocean's moan,

Or faced the dizzy crash and coil
That drown'd its mournfuller tone.
But never, when the tide drew back,
Trod I the weltering strand;
For horribly my single track
Pursued me in the sand.

2

One morn I watch'd the rain subside;
And then fared singly forth,
Below the clouds, till eve to ride
From Edgecumb to the North.
Once, only once, I paused upon
The sea-transcending height,
And turn'd to gaze: far breakers shone,
Slow gleams of silent light.
Into my horse I struck the spur;
Sad was the soul in me;
Sore were my lids with tears for her
Who slept beneath the sea.
But soon I sooth'd my startled horse,
And check'd that sudden grief,
And look'd abroad on crag and gorse
And Dartmoor's cloudy reef.
Far forth the air was dark and clear,
The crags acute and large,
The clouds uneven, black, and near,
And ragged at the marge.
The spider, in his rainy mesh,
Shook not, but, as I rode,
The opposing air, sweet, sharp, and fresh,
Against my hot lids flow'd.
Peat-cutters pass'd me, carrying tools;
Hawks glimmer'd on the wing;
The ground was glad with grassy pools,
And brooklets galloping;

And sparrows chirp'd, with feathers spread,
And dipp'd and drank their fill,
Where, down its sandy channel, fled
The lessening road-side rill.

3

I cross'd the furze-grown table-land,
And near'd the northern vales,
That lay perspicuously plann'd
In lesser hills and dales.
Then rearward, in a slow review,
Fell Dartmoor's jagged lines;
Around were dross-heaps, red and blue,
Old shafts of gutted mines,
Impetuous currents copper-stain'd,
Wheels stream-urged with a roar,
Sluice-guiding grooves, strong works that strain'd
With freight of upheaved ore.
And then, the train, with shock on shock,
Swift rush and birth-scream dire,
Grew from the bosom of the rock,
And pass'd in noise and fire.
With brazen throb, with vital stroke,
It went, far heard, far seen,
Setting a track of shining smoke
Against the pastoral green.
Then, bright drops, lodged in budding trees,
Were loos'd in sudden showers,
Touch'd by the novel western breeze,
Friend of the backward flowers.
Then rose the Church at Tavistock,
The rain still falling there;
But sunny Dartmoor seem'd to mock
The gloom with cheerful glare.

About the West the gilt vane reel'd
And pois'd; and, with sweet art,
The sudden, jangling changes peal'd,
Until, around my heart,
Conceits of brighter times, of times
The brighter for past storms,
Clung thick as bees, when brazen chimes
Call down the hiveless swarms.

4

I rested at the Tiger Inn,
There half-way on my ride,
And mused with joy of friends and kin
Who did my coming bide.
The Vicar, in his sombre wear
That shone about the knees,
Before me stood, his aspect fair
With godly memories.
I heard again his kind 'Good-bye:
Christ speed and keep thee still
From frantic passions, for they die
And leave a frantic will.'
My fond, old Tutor, learn'd and meek!
A soul, in strangest truth,
As wide as Asia and as weak;
Not like his daughter Ruth.
A Girl of fullest heart she was;
Her spirit's lovely flame
Nor dazzled nor surprised, because
It always burn'd the same;
And in the maiden path she trod
Fair was the wife foreshown,
A Mary in the house of God,
A Martha in her own.
Charms for the sight she had; but these
Were tranquil, grave, and chaste,

And all too beautiful to please
A rash, untutor'd taste.

5

In love with home, I rose and eyed
The rainy North; but there
The distant hill-top, in its pride,
Adorn'd the brilliant air:
And, as I pass'd from Tavistock,
The scatter'd dwellings white,
The Church, the golden weather-cock,
Were whelm'd in happy light;
The children 'gan the sun to greet,
With song and senseless shout;
The lambs to skip, their dams to bleat;
In Tavy leapt the trout;
Across a fleeting eastern cloud,
The splendid rainbow sprang,
And larks, invisible and loud,
Within its zenith sang.

6

So lay the Earth that saw the skies
Grow clear and bright above,
As the repentant spirit lies
In God's forgiving love.
The lark forsook the waning day,
And all loud songs did cease;
The Robin, from a wither'd spray,
Sang like a soul at peace.
Far to the South, in sunset glow'd
The peaks of Dartmoor ridge,
And Tamar, full and tranquil, flow'd
Beneath the Gresson Bridge.
There, conscious of the numerous noise
Of rain-awaken'd rills,

And gathering deep and sober joys
From the heart-enlarging hills,
I sat, until the first white star
Appear'd, with dewy rays,
And the fair moon began to bar
With shadows all the ways.
O, well is thee, whate'er thou art,
And happy shalt thou be,
If thou hast known, within thy heart,
The peace that came to me.
O, well is thee, if aught shall win
Thy spirit to confess,
God proffers all, 'twere grievous sin
To live content in less!

7

I mounted, now, my patient nag;
And scaled the easy steep;
And soon beheld the quiet flag
On Lanson's solemn Keep.
And now, whenas the waking lights
Bespake the valley'd Town,
A child o'ertook me, on the heights,
In cap and russet gown.
It was an alms-taught scholar trim,
Who, on her happy way,
Sang to herself the morrow's hymn;
For this was Saturday.

'Saint Stephen, stoned, nor grieved nor groan'd:
'Twas all for his good gain;
For Christ him blest, till he confess'd
A sweet content in pain.

'Then Christ His cross is no way loss,
But even a present boon:
Of His dear blood fair shines a flood
On heaven's eternal noon.'

8

My sight, once more, was dim for her
Who slept beneath the sea,
As on I sped, without the spur,
By homestead, heath, and lea.
Beside my path the moon kept pace,
In meek and brilliant power,
And lit, ere long, the eastern face
Of Tamerton Church-tower.

THE YEW-BERRY.

I

I CALL this idle history the 'Berry of the Yew;'
Because there's nothing sweeter than its husk of scarlet glue,
And nothing half so bitter as its black core bitten through.

I loved, saw hope, and said so; learn'd that Laura loved again:
Why speak of joy then suffer'd? My head throbs, and I would fain
Find words to lay the spectre starting now before my brain.

She loved me: all things told it; eye to eye, and palm to palm:
As the pause upon the ceasing of a thousand-voiced psalm
Was the mighty satisfaction and the full eternal calm.

On her face, when she was laughing, was the seriousness within;
Her sweetest smiles, (and sweeter did a lover never win,)
In passing, grew so absent that they made her fair cheek thin.

On her face, when she was speaking, thoughts
unworded used to live ;
So that when she whisper'd to me, 'Better joy
Earth cannot give,'
Her following silence added, 'But Earth's joy is
fugitive.'

For there a nameless something, though suppress'd,
still spread around ;
The same was on her eyelids, if she look'd towards
the ground ;
In her laughing, singing, talking, still the same
was in the sound ;—

A sweet dissatisfaction, which at no time went
away,
But shadow'd so her spirit, even at its brightest
play,
That her mirth was like the sunshine in the closing
of the day.

2

Let none ask joy the highest, save those who
would have it end :
There's weight in earthly blessings ; they are
earthy, and they tend,
By predetermin'd impulse, at their highest, to
descend.

I still for a happy season, in the present, saw the
past,
Mistaking one for the other, feeling sure my hold
was fast
On that of which the symbols vanish'd daily : but,
at last,

As when we watch bright cloud-banks round about
the low sun ranged,
We suddenly remember some rich glory gone or
changed,
All at once I comprehended that her love was
grown estranged.

From this time, spectral glimpses of a darker fear
came on :
They came ; but, since I scorn'd them, were no
sooner come than gone.—
At times, some gap in sequence frees the spirit,
and, anon,

We remember states of living ended ere we left
the womb,
And see a vague aurora flashing to us from the
tomb,
The dreamy light of new states, dash'd tremend-
ously with gloom.

We tremble for an instant, and a single instant
more
Brings absolute oblivion, and we pass on as before !
Ev'n so those dreadful glimpses came, and startled,
and were o'er.

3

One morning, one bright morning, Wortley met
me. He and I,
As we rode across the country, met a friend of his.
His eye
Caught Wortley's, who rode past him. 'What,'
said he, 'pass old friends by?

So I've heard your game is grounded! Why your
life's one long romance
After your last French fashion. But, ah! ha!
should Herbert chance——'
'Nay, Herbert's here,' said he, and introduced me,
with a glance

Of easy smiles, ignoring this embarrassment; and
then
This pass'd off, and soon after I went home, and
took a pen,
And wrote the signs here written, with much more,
and where, and when;

And, having read them over once or twice, sat
down to think,
From time to time beneath them writing more, till,
link by link,
The evidence against her was fulfill'd: I did not
shrink,

But I read them all together, and I found it was
no dream.
What I felt I can't remember; an oblivion which
the gleam
Of light which oft comes through it shews for
blessedness extreme.

At last I moved, exclaiming, 'I will not believe,
until
'I've spoken once with Laura.' Thereon all my
heart grew still:
For doubt and faith are active, and decisions of
the will.

4

I found my Love. She started: I suppose that I
was pale.
We talk'd; but words on both sides, seem'd to
sicken, flag, and fail.
Then I gave her what I'd written, watching whether
she would quail.

In and out flew sultry blushes: so, when red
reflections rise
From conflagrations, filling the alarm'd heart with
surmise,
They lighten now, now darken, up and down the
gloomy skies.

She finish'd once; but fearing to look from it, read
it o'er
Ten times at least. Poor Laura, had those read-
ings been ten score,
That refuge from confusion had confused thee more
and more!

I said, 'You're ill, sit Laura,' and she sat down
and was meek.
'Ah tears! not lost to God then. But pray Laura,
do not speak:
I understand you better by the moisture on your
cheek.'

She shook with sobs, in silence. I yet checking
passion's sway,
Said only, 'Farewell Laura!' then got up, and
strode away;
For I felt that she would burst my heart asunder
should I stay.

Oh, ghastly corpse of Love so slain! it makes the
world its hearse;
Or, as the sun extinct and dead, after the dooms-
day curse,
It rolls, an unseen danger, through the darken'd
universe.

I struggled to forget this; but, forgetfulness too
sweet!
It startled with its sweetness, thus involv'd its own
defeat;
And, every time this happen'd, aching memory
would repeat

The shock of that discovery: so at length I learn'd
by heart,
And never, save when sleeping, suffer'd thence-
forth to depart,
The feeling of my sorrow: and in time this sooth'd
the smart.

Yet even now not seldom, in my leisure, in the
thick
Of other thoughts, unchallenged, words and looks
come crowding quick—
They do while I am writing, till the sunshine
makes me sick.

THE RIVER.

(ÆT. 16.)

It is a venerable place,
An old ancestral ground,
So broad, the rainbow wholly stands
Within its lordly bound ;
And here the river waits and winds
By many a wooded mound.

Upon a rise, where single oaks
And clumps of beeches tall
Drop pleasantly their shade beneath,
Half-hid amidst them all,
Stands in its quiet dignity
An ancient manor-hall.

About its many gable-ends
The swallows wheel their flight ;
The huge fantastic weather-vanes
Look happy in the light ;
The warm front through the foliage gleams,
A comfortable sight.

The ivied turrets seem to love
The low, protected leas ;
And, though this manor-hall hath seen
The snow of centuries,
How freshly still it stand amid
Its wealth of swelling trees !

The leafy summer-time is young;
The yearling lambs are strong;
The sunlight glances merrily;
The trees are full of song;
The valley-loving river flows
Contentedly along.

Look where the merry weather-vanes
Veer upon yonder tower:
There, amid starry jessamine
And clasping passion-flower,
The sweetest Maid of all the land
Is weeping in her bower.

Alas, the lowly Youth she loves
Loves her, but fears to sue:
He came this morning hurriedly;
Then forth her blushes flew!
But he talk'd of common things, and so
Her eyes are fill'd with dew.

Time passes on; the clouds are come;
The river, late so bright,
Rolls foul and black, and gloomily
Makes known across the night,
In far-heard plash and weary drench,
The passage of its might.

The noble Bridegroom counts the hours;
The guests are coming fast;
(The vanes are creaking drearily
Within the dying blast!)
The bashful Bride is at his side;
And night is here at last.

The guests are gay; the minstrels play;
'Tis liker noon than night;
From side to side, they toast the Bride,
Who blushes ruby light:
For one and all within that hall,
It is a cheerful sight.

But unto one, who stands alone,
Among the mists without,
Watching the windows, bright with shapes
Of king and saint devout,
Strangely across the muffled air
Pierces the laughter-shout.

No sound or sight this solemn night
But moves the soul to fear:
The faded saints stare through the gloom,
Askant, and wan, and blear;
And wither'd cheeks of watchful kings
Start from their purple gear.

The burthen of the wedding-song
Comes to him like a wail;
The stream, athwart the cedar-grove,
Is shining ghastly pale:
His cloudy brow clears suddenly!
Dark soul, what does thee ail?

He turns him from the lighted hall;
The pale stream curls and heaves
And moans beyond the gloomy wood,
Through which he breaks and cleaves;
And now his footfall dies away
Upon the wither'd leaves.

The restless moon, among the clouds,
Is loitering slowly by;
Now in a circle like the ring
About a weeping eye;
Now left quite bare and bright; and now
A pallor in the sky;

And now she's looking through the mist,
Cold, lustreless, and wan,
And wildly, past her dreary form,
The watery clouds rush on,
A moment white beneath her light,
And then, like spirits, gone.

Silent and fast they hurry past,
Their swiftness striketh dread,
For earth is hush'd, and no breath sweeps
The spider's rainy thread,
And everything, but those pale clouds,
Is dark, and still, and dead.

The lonely stars are here and there,
But weak and wasting all;
The winds are dead, the cedars spread
Their branches like a pall;
The guests, by laughing twos and threes,
Have left the bridal hall.

Beneath the mossy, ivied bridge,
The river slippeth past:
The current deep is still as sleep,
And yet so very fast!
There's something in its quietness
That makes the soul aghast.

No wind is in the willow-tree
That droops above the bank;
The water passes quietly
Beneath the sedges dank;
Yet the willow trembles in the stream,
And the dry reeds talk and clank.

The weak stars swoon; the jagged moon
Is lost in the cloudy air.
No thought of light! save where the wave
Sports with a fitful glare.
The dumb and dreadful world is full
Of darkness and night-mare.

The hall-clocks clang; the watch-dog barks.
What are his dreams about?
Marsh lights leap, and tho' fast asleep
The owlets shriek and shout;
The stars, thro' chasms in utter black,
Race like a drunken rout.

'Wake, wake, oh wake!' the Bridegroom now
Calls to his sleeping Bride:
'Alas, I saw thee, pale and dead,
Roll down a frightful tide!'
He takes her hand: 'How chill thou art!
What is it, sweet my Bride?'

The Bride bethinks her now of him
Who last night was no guest.
'Sweet Heaven! and for me? I dream!
Be calm, thou throbbing breast.'
She says, in thought, a solemn prayer
And sinks again to rest.

Along, along, swiftly and strong
The river slippeth past;
The current deep is still as sleep,
And yet so very fast!
There's something in its quietness
That makes the soul aghast.

The morn has risen: wildly by
The water glides to-day;
Outspread upon its eddying face,
Long weeds and rushes play;
And on the bank the fungus rots,
And the grass is foul'd with clay.

Time passes on: the park is bare;
The year is scant and lean;
The river's banks are desolate;
The air is chill and keen;
But, now and then, a sunny day
Comes with a thought of green.

Amid blear February's flaw,
Tremulous snowdrops peep;
The crocus, in the shrewd March morn,
Starts from its wintry sleep;
The daisies sun themselves in hosts,
Among the pasturing sheep.

The waters, in their old content,
Between fresh margins run;
The pike, as trackless as a sound,
Shoots thro' the current dun;
And languid new-born chestnut-leaves
Expand beneath the sun.

The summer's prime is come again ;
The lilies bloom anew ;
The current keeps the doubtful past
Deep in its bosom blue,
And babbles low thro' quiet fields
Gray with the falling dew.

The sheep-bell tolls the curfew-time ;
The gnats, a busy rout,
Fleck the warm air ; the distant owl
Shouteth a sleepy shout ;
The voiceless bat, more felt than seen,
Is flitting round about ;

The poplar's leaflet scarcely stirs ;
The river seems to think ;
Across the dusk, the lily broad
Looks coolly from the brink ;
And knee-deep in the freshet's fall,
The meek-eyed cattle drink.

The chafers boom ; the white moths rise
Like spirits from the ground ;
The gray-flies sing their weary tune,
A distant, dream-like sound ;
And far, far off, in the slumberous eve,
Bayeth a restless hound.

At this sweet time, the Lady walks
Beside the gentle stream ;
She marks the waters curl along,
Beneath the sunset gleam,
And in her soul a sorrow moves,
Like memory of a dream.

She passes on. How still the earth,
And all the air above!
Here, where of late the scritch-owl shriek'd,
Whispers the happy dove;
And the river, through the ivied bridge,
Flows calm as household love.

THE FALCON.

WHO would not be Sir Hubert, for his birth and bearing fine,
His rich sky-skirted woodlands, valleys flowing oil and wine;
Sir Hubert, to whose sunning all the rays of fortune shine?

So most men praised Sir Hubert, and some others warm'd with praise
Of Hubert noble-hearted, than whom none went on his ways
Less spoilt by splendid fortune, whom no peril could amaze.

To Ladies all, save one, he was the rule by which the worth
Of other men was reckon'd; so that many a maid, for dearth
Of such a knight to woo her, love forswore, and with it mirth.

No prince could match his banquets, when proud Mabel was his guest;
And shows and sumptuous triumphs day by day his hope express'd
That love e'en yet might burgeon in her young unburgeon'd breast.

Time pass'd, and use for riches pass'd with hope,
which slowly fled ;
And want came on unheeded ; and report in one
day spread
Of good Sir Hubert houseless, and of Mabel richly
wed.

Forth went he from the city where she dwelt, to
one poor farm,
All left of all his valleys : there Sir Hubert's single
arm
Served Hubert's wants ; and labour soon relieved
love's rankling harm.

Much hardship brought much easement of the
melancholy freight
He bore within his bosom ; and his fancy was elate
And proud of Love's rash sacrifice which led to this
estate.

One friend was left, a falcon, famed for beauty,
skill, and size,
Kept from his fortune's ruin, for the sake of its
great eyes,
That seem'd to him like Mabel's. Of an evening
he would rise,

And wake its royal glances and reluctantly flapp'd
wings,
And looks of grave communion with his lightsome
questionings,
That broke the drowsy sameness, and the sense
like fear that springs

At night, when we are conscious of our distance
from the strife
Of cities, and the memory of the spirit in all things
rife
Endows the silence round us with a grim and
ghastly life.

His active resignation wrought, in time, a heartfelt
peace,
And though, in noble bosoms, love once lit can
never cease,
He could walk and think of Mabel, and his pace
would not increase.

Who say, when somewhat distanced from the heat
and fiercer might,
'Love's brand burns us no longer; it is out,' use
not their sight:
For ever and for ever we are lighted by the light:

And ere there be extinguish'd one minutest flame,
love-fann'd,
The Pyramids of Egypt shall have no place in the
land,
But as a nameless portion of its ever-shifting
sand.

News came at last that Mabel was a widow; but,
with this,
That all her dead Lord's wealth went first to her
one child and his;
So she was not for Hubert, had she beckon'd him
to bliss;

For Hubert felt, tho' Mabel might, like him, become
resign'd
To poverty for Love's sake, she might never, like
him, find
That poverty is plenty, peace, and freedom of the
mind.

One morning, while he rested from his delving,
spade in hand,
He thought of her and blest her, and he look'd
about the land,
And he, and all he look'd at, seem'd to brighten
and expand.

The wind was newly risen ; and the airy skies were
rife
With fleets of sailing cloudlets, and the trees were
all in strife,
Extravagantly triumphant at their newly gotten life.

Birds wrangled in the branches, with a trouble of
sweet noise;
Even the conscious cuckoo, judging wisest to
rejoice,
Shook round his 'cuckoo, cuckoo,' as if careless of
his voice.

But Hubert mused and marvell'd at the glory in
his breast ;
The first glow turn'd to passion, and he nursed it
unexpress'd ;
And glory gilding glory turn'd, at last, to sunny
rest.

Then again he look'd around him, like an angel, and, behold,
The scene was changed; no cloudlets cross'd the serious blue, but, roll'd
Behind the distant hill-tops, gleam'd aërial hills of gold.

The wind too was abated, and the trees and birds were grown
As quiet as the cloud-banks; right above, the bright sun shone,
Down looking from the forehead of the giant sky alone.

Then the nightingale, awaken'd by the silence, shot a throng
Of notes into the sunshine; cautious first, then swift and strong;
Then he madly smote them round him, till the bright air throbb'd with song,

And suddenly stopp'd singing, all amid his ecstasies:—
Myrtles rustle; what sees Hubert? sight is sceptic, but his knees
Bend to the Lady Mabel, as she blossoms from the trees.

She spoke, her eyes cast downwards, while upon them, dropp'd half way,
Lids fairer than the bosom of an unblown lily lay:
'In faith of ancient amity, Sir Hubert, I this day

'Would beg a boon, and bind me your great debtor.' O, her mouth
Was sweet beyond new honey, or the bean-perfumed South,
And better than pomegranates to a pilgrim dumb for drouth!

She look'd at his poor homestead; at the spade beside his hand;
And then her heart reproach'd her, What inordinate demand
Was she come there for making! Then she says, in accents bland,

Her Page and she are weary, and her wish can wait; she'll share
His noontide meal, by his favour. This he hastens to prepare;
But, lo! the roost is empty, and his humble larder bare.

No friend has he to help him; no one near of whom to claim
The tax, and force its payment in his passion's sovereign name;
No time to set the pitfalls for the swift and fearful game;

Too late to fly his falcon, which, as if it would assist
Its master's trouble, perches on his idly proffer'd fist,
With busy, dumb caresses, treading up and down his wrist.

But now a gleam of comfort and a shadow of dismay
Pass o'er the good knight's features ; now it seems he would essay
The fatness of his falcon, while it flaps both wings for play ;

Now, lo, the ruthless lover takes it off its trusted stand ;
Grasps all its frighten'd body with his hard remorseless hand ;
Puts out its faithful life, and plucks and broils it on the brand.

In midst of this her dinner, Mabel gave her wish its word :
'My wilful child, Sir Hubert, pines from fancy long deferr'd ;
And now he raves in fever to possess your famous bird.'

'Alas!' he said, 'behold it there.' Then nobly did she say :
'It grieves my heart, Sir Hubert, that I'm much too poor to pay
For this o'er-queenly banquet I am honour'd with to-day ;

'But if, Sir, we two, henceforth, can converse as friends, my board
To you shall be as open as it would were you its Lord.'
And so she bow'd and left him, from his vex'd mind unrestored.

Months pass'd, and Hubert went not, but lived on
in his old way;
Until to him, one morning, Mabel sent her Page
to say,
That, should it suit his pleasure, she would speak
with him that day.

'Ah, welcome Sir!' said Mabel, rising courteous,
kind and free:
'I hoped, ere this, to have had you for my guest,
but now I see
That you are even prouder than they whisper you
to be.'

Made grave by her great beauty, but not dazzled,
he replied,
With every noble courtesy, to her words; and
spoke beside
Such things as are permitted to bare friendship;
not in pride,

Or wilful overacting of the right, which often
blends
Its sacrificial pathos, bitter-sweet, with lover's ends,
Or that he now remember'd her command to meet
'as friends;'

But having not had knowledge that the infant heir
was dead,
Whose life made it more loving to preserve his
love unsaid,
He waited, calmly wondering to what mark this
summons led.

She, puzzled with a strangeness by his actions
disavow'd,
Spoke further: 'Once, Sir Hubert, I was thought-
less, therefore proud;
Your love on me shone sunlike. I, alas, have
been your cloud,

'And, graceless, quench'd the light that made me
splendid. I would fain
Pay part of what I owe you, that is, if,—alas, but
then
I know not! Things are changed, and you are
not as other men.'

She strove to give her meaning, yet blush'd deeply
with dismay
Lest he should find it. Hubert fear'd she purpos'd
to repay
His love with less than love. Thought he, 'Sin
'twas my hawk to slay!'

His eyes are dropp'd in sorrow from their worship-
ping: but, lo!
Upon her sable vesture they are fall'n; with pro-
gress slow,
Through dawning apprehension to sweet hope, his
features glow;

And all at once are lighted with a light, as when
the moon,
Long labouring to the margin of a cloud, still
seeming soon
About to swim beyond it, bursts at last as bare as
noon.

'O, Lady, I have loved, and long kept silence: but I see
The time is come for speaking, O, sweet Lady, I should be
The blessedest knight in Christendom, were I beloved by thee!'

One small hand's weight of whiteness on her bosom did she press;
The other, woo'd with kisses bold, refused not his caress;
Feasting the hungry silence came, sob-clad, her silver 'Yes.'

Now who would not be Hubert, for his dark-eyed Bride divine,
Her rich, sky-skirted woodlands, valleys flowing oil and wine,
Sir Hubert to whose sunning all the rays of fortune shine!

THE WOODMAN'S DAUGHTER.

(ÆT. 16.)

In Gerald's Cottage by the hill,
Old Gerald and his child,
Innocent Maud, dwelt happily;
He toil'd, and she beguiled
The long day at her spinning-wheel,
In the garden now grown wild.

At Gerald's stroke the jay awoke;
Till noon hack follow'd hack,
Before the nearest hill had time
To give its echo back;
And evening mists were in the lane
Ere Gerald's arm grew slack.

Meanwhile, below the scented heaps
Of honeysuckle flower,
That made their simple cottage-porch
A cool, luxurious bower,
Maud sat beside her spinning-wheel,
And spun from hour to hour.

The growing thread thro' her fingers sped;
Round flew the polish'd wheel;
Merrily rang the notes she sang
At every finish'd reel;
From the hill again, like a glad refrain,
Follow'd the rapid peal.

But all is changed. The rusting axe
Reddens a wither'd bough;
A spider spins in the spinning-wheel,
And Maud sings wildly now;
And village gossips say she knows
Grief she may not avow.

Her secret's this: In the sweet age
When heaven's our side the lark,
She follow'd her old father, where
He work'd from dawn to dark,
For months, to thin the crowded groves
Of the old manorial Park.

She fancied and he felt she help'd:
And, whilst he hack'd and saw'd,
The rich Squire's son, a young boy then,
Whole mornings, as if awed,
Stood silent by, and gazed in turn
At Gerald and on Maud.

And sometimes, in a sullen tone,
He offer'd fruits, and she
Received them always with an air
So unreserved and free,
That shame-faced distance soon became
Familiarity.

Therefore in time, when Gerald shook
The woods, no longer coy,
The young heir and the cottage-girl
Would steal out to enjoy
The sound of one another's talk,
A simple girl and boy.

Spring after Spring, they took their walks,
Uncheck'd, unquestion'd; yet
They learn'd to hide their wanderings
By wood and rivulet,
Because they could not give themselves
A reason why they met.

Once Maud came weeping back. 'Poor Child!'
Was all her father said:
And he would steady his old hand
Upon her hapless head,
And think of her as tranquilly
As if the child were dead.

But he is gone: and Maud steals out,
This gentle day of June;
And having sobb'd her pain to sleep,
Help'd by the stream's soft tune,
She rests along the willow-trunk,
Below the calm blue noon.

The shadow of her shame and her
Deep in the stream, behold!
Smiles quake over her parted lips:
Some thought has made her bold;
She stoops to dip her fingers in,
To feel if it be cold.

'Tis soft and warm, and runs as 'twere
Perpetually at play:
But then the stream, she recollects,
Bears everything away.
There is a dull pool hard at hand
That sleeps both night and day.

She marks the closing weeds that shut
The water from her sight;
They stir awhile, but now are still;
Her arms fall down; the light
Is horrible, and her countenance
Is pale as a cloud at night.

Merrily now from the small church-tower
Clashes a noisy chime;
The larks climb up thro' the heavenly blue,
Carolling as they climb:
Is it the twisting water-eft
That dimples the green slime?

The pool reflects the scarlet West
With a hot and guilty glow;
The East is changing ashy pale;
But Maud will never go
While those great bubbles struggle up
From the rotting weeds below.

The light has changed. A little since
You scarcely might descry
The moon, now gleaming sharp and bright,
From the small cloud slumbering nigh;
And, one by one, the timid stars
Step out into the sky.

The night blackens the pool; but Maud
Is constant at her post,
Sunk in a dread, unnatural sleep,
Beneath the skiey host
Of drifting mists, thro' which the moon
Is riding like a ghost.

THE STORM.

WITHIN the pale blue haze above,
Some pitchy shreds took size and form,
And, like a madman's wrath or love,
From nothing rose a sudden storm.
The blossom'd limes, which seem'd to exhale
Her breath, were swept with one strong sweep,
And up the dusty road the hail
Came like a flock of hasty sheep,
Driving me under a cottage-porch,
Whence I could see the distant Spire,
Which, in the darkness, seem'd a torch
Touch'd with the sun's retreating fire.
A voice, so sweet that even her voice,
I thought, could scarcely be more sweet,
As thus I stay'd against my choice,
Did mine attracted hearing greet;
And presently I turn'd my head
Where the kind music seem'd to be,
And where, to an old blind man, she read
The words that teach the blind to see.
She did not mark me; swift I went,
Thro' the fierce shower's whistle and smoke,
To her home, and thence her woman sent
Back with umbrella, shoes and cloak.
The storm soon pass'd; the sun's quick glare
Lay quench'd in vapour fleecy, fray'd;
And all the moist, delicious air
Was fill'd with shine that cast no shade;

And, when she came, forth the sun gleam'd,
And clash'd the trembling Minster chimes;
And the breath with which she thank'd me seem'd
Brought thither from the blossom'd limes.

THE BARREN SHORE.

FULL many sing to me and thee
Their riches gather'd by the sea;
But I will sing, for I'm footsore,
The burthen of the barren shore.

The hue of love how lively shown
In this sole found cerulean stone
By twenty leagues of ocean roar.
O, burthen of the barren shore!

And these few crystal fragments bright,
As clear as truth, as strong as right,
I found in footing twenty more.
O, burthen of the barren shore!

And how far did I go for this
Small, precious piece of ambergris?
Of weary leagues I went threescore.
O, burthen of the barren shore!

The sand is poor, the sea is rich,
And I, I am I know not which;
And well it were to know no more
The burthen of the barren shore!

OLYMPUS.

THROUGH female subtlety intense,
Or the good luck of innocence,
Or both, my Wife, with whom I plan
To pass calm evenings when I can,
After the chattering girls and boys
Are gone, or the less grateful noise
Is over, of grown tongues that chime
Untruly, once upon a time
Prevail'd with me to change my mind
Of reading out how Rosalind
In Arden jested, and to go
Where people whom I ought to know,
She said, would meet that night. And I,
Who inly murmur'd, 'I will try
Some dish more sharply spiced than this
Milk-soup men call domestic bliss,'
Took, as she, laughing, bade me take,
Our eldest boy's brown wide-awake
And straw box of cigars, and went
Where, like a careless parliament
Of gods olympic, six or eight
Authors and else, reputed great,
Were met in council jocular
On many things, pursuing far
Truth, only for the chase's glow,
Quick as they caught her letting go,
Or, when at fault the view-halloo,
Playing about the missing clue.

And coarse jests came; 'But gods are coarse,'
Thought I, yet not without remorse,
While memory of the gentle words,
Wife, Mother, Sister, flash'd like swords.
And so, after two hours of wit,
That burnt a hole where'er it hit,
I said I would not stay to sup,
Because my Wife was sitting up;
And walk'd home with a sense that I
Was no match for that company.
Smelling of smoke, which, always kind,
Amelia said she did not mind,
I sipp'd her tea, saw Baby scold
And finger at the muslin fold,
Through which he push'd his nose at last,
And choked and chuckled, feeding fast;
And, he asleep and sent upstairs,
She rang the servants in to prayers;
And after heard what men of fame
Had urged 'gainst this and that. 'For shame!'
She said, but argument show'd not.
'If I had answer'd thus,' I thought,
'Twould not have pass'd for very wise.
But I have not her voice and eyes!
Howe'er it be, I'm glad of home,
Yea, very glad at heart to come,
And lay a happy head to rest
On her unreasonable breast.'

THE ROSY BOSOM'D HOURS.

A FLORIN to the willing Guard
Secured, for half the way,
(He lock'd us in, ah, lucky-starr'd,)
A curtain'd, front coupé.
The sparkling sun of August shone;
The wind was in the West;
Your gown and all that you had on
Was what became you best;
And we were in that seldom mood
When soul with soul agrees,
Mingling, like flood with equal flood,
In agitated ease.
Far round, each blade of harvest bare
Its little load of bread;
Each furlong of that journey fair
With separate sweetness sped.
The calm of use was coming o'er
The wonder of our wealth,
And now, maybe, 'twas not much more
Than Eden's common health.
We paced the sunny platform, while
The train at Havant changed:
What made the people kindly smile,
Or stare with looks estranged?
Too radiant for a wife you seem'd,
Serener than a bride;
Me happiest born of men I deem'd,
And show'd perchance my pride.

I loved that girl, so gaunt and tall,
Who whispered loud, 'Sweet Thing!'
Scanning your figure, slight yet all
Round as your own gold ring.
At Salisbury you stray'd alone
Within the shafted glooms,
Whilst I was by the Verger shown
The brasses and the tombs.
At tea we talk'd of matters deep,
Of joy that never dies;
We laugh'd, till love was mix'd with sleep
Within your great sweet eyes.
The next day, sweet with luck no less
And sense of sweetness past,
The full tide of our happiness
Rose higher than the last.
At Dawlish, 'mid the pools of brine,
You stept from rock to rock,
One hand quick tightening upon mine,
One holding up your frock.
On starfish and on weeds alone
You seem'd intent to be:
Flash'd those great gleams of hope unknown
From you, or from the sea?
Ne'er came before, ah, when again
Shall come two days like these:
Such quick delight within the brain,
Within the heart such peace?
I thought, indeed, by magic chance,
A third from Heaven to win,
But as, at dusk, we reach'd Penzance,
A drizzling rain set in.

THE AFTER-GLOW.

SUSPICION'S playful counterfeit
Begot your question strange:
The only thing that I forget
Is that there's any change.
Did that long blight which fell on you
My zeal of heart assuage?
Less willing shall I watch you through
The milder illness, age?
To my monopoly first blind
When risks no longer live,
And careless of the hand so kind
That has no more to give,
Shall I forget Spring like a tree,
Nor boast, 'Her honied cup
Of beauty to his lips save me
No man has lifted up!'
Mine are not memories that come
Of joys that could not last:
They *are;* and you, Dear, are the sum
Of all your lovely past.
Yet if, with all this conscious weal,
I still should covet more,
The joy behind me shall reveal
The joy that waits before:
I'll mind from sickness how to life
You came, by tardy stealth,
Till, one spring day, I clasp'd my wife
Abloom with blandest health.

THE GIRL OF ALL PERIODS.

AN IDYLL.

'AND even our women,' lastly grumbles Ben,
'Leaving their nature, dress and talk like men!'
A damsel, as our train stops at Five Ashes,
Down to the station in a dog-cart dashes.
A footman buys her ticket, 'Third class, parly;'
And, in huge-button'd coat and 'Champagne Charley'
And such scant manhood else as use allows her,
Her two shy knees bound in a single trouser,
With, 'twixt her shapely lips, a violet
Perch'd as a proxy for a cigarette,
She takes her window in our smoking carriage,
And scans us, calmly scorning men and marriage.
Ben frowns in silence; older, I know better
Than to read ladies 'haviour in the letter.
This aping man is crafty Love's devising
To make the woman's difference more surprising;
And, as for feeling wroth at such rebelling,
Who'd scold the child for now and then repelling
Lures with 'I won't!' or for a moment's straying
In its sure growth towards more full obeying?
'Yes, she had read the "Legend of the Ages,"
'And George Sand too, skipping the wicked pages.'
And, whilst we talk'd, her protest firm and perky
Against mankind, I thought, grew lax and jerky;
And, at a compliment, her mouth's compressure

Nipt in its birth a little laugh of pleasure ;
And smiles, forbidden her lips, as weakness horrid,
Broke, in grave lights, from eyes and chin and forehead ;
And, as I push'd kind 'vantage 'gainst the scorner,
The two shy knees press'd shier to the corner ;
And Ben began to talk with her, the rather
Because he found out that he knew her father,
Sir Francis Applegarth, of Fenny Compton,
And danced once with her sister Maude at Brompton ;
And then he stared until he quite confused her,
More pleased with her than I, who but excused her ;
And, when she got out, he, with sheepish glances,
Said he'd stop too, and call on old Sir Francis.

NIGHT AND SLEEP.

1

How strange at night to wake
And watch, while others sleep,
Till sight and hearing ache
For objects that may keep
The awful inner sense
Unroused, lest it should mark
The life that haunts the emptiness
And horror of the dark!

2

How strange at night the bay
Of dogs, how wild the note
Of cocks that scream for day,
In homesteads far remote;
How strange and wild to hear
The old and crumbling tower,
Amid the darkness, suddenly
Take tongue and speak the hour!

3

Albeit the love-sick brain
Affects the dreary moon,
Ill things alone refrain
From life's nocturnal swoon:

Men melancholy mad,
  Beasts ravenous and sly,
The robber, and the murderer,
  Remorse, with lidless eye.

4

The nightingale is gay,
  For she can vanquish night;
Dreaming, she sings of day
  Notes that make darkness bright;
But when the refluent gloom
  Saddens the gaps of song,
Men charge on her the dolefulness,
  And call her crazed with wrong.

A LONDON FÊTE.

All night fell hammers, shock on shock ;
With echoes Newgate's granite clang'd :
The scaffold built, at eight o'clock
They brought the man out to be hang'd.
Then came from all the people there
A single cry, that shook the air ;
Mothers held up their babes to see,
Who spread their hands, and crow'd for glee ;
Here a girl from her vesture tore
A rag to wave with, and join'd the roar ;
There a man, with yelling tired,
Stopp'd, and the culprit's crime inquired ;
A sot, below the doom'd man dumb,
Bawl'd his health in the world to come ;
These blasphemed and fought for places ;
Those, half-crush'd, cast frantic faces,
To windows, where, in freedom sweet,
Others enjoy'd the wicked treat.
At last, the show's black crisis pended ;
Struggles for better standings ended ;
The rabble's lips no longer curst,
But stood agape with horrid thirst ;
Thousands of breasts beat horrid hope ;
Thousands of eyeballs, lit with hell,
Burnt one way all, to see the rope
Unslacken as the platform fell.
The rope flew tight ; and then the roar
Burst forth afresh ; less loud, but more

Confused and affrighting than before.
A few harsh tongues for ever led
The common din, the chaos of noises,
But ear could not catch what they said.
As when the realm of the damn'd rejoices
At winning a soul to its will,
That clatter and clangour of hateful voices
Sicken'd and stunn'd the air, until
The dangling corpse hung straight and still.
The show complete, the pleasure past,
The solid masses loosen'd fast :
A thief slunk off, with ample spoil,
To ply elsewhere his daily toil ;
A baby strung its doll to a stick ;
A mother praised the pretty trick ;
Two children caught and hang'd a cat ;
Two friends walk'd on, in lively chat ;
And two, who had disputed places,
Went forth to fight, with murderous faces.

THE CIRCLES.

'WITHIN yon world-wide cirque of war
What's hidden which they fight so for?'
My guide made answer, 'Rich increase
Of virtue and use, which are by peace,
And peace by war. That inner ring
Are craftsmen, working many a thing
For use, and, these within, the wise
Explore the grass and read the skies.'
'Can the stars' motions give me peace,
Or the herbs' virtues mine increase?
Of all this triple shell,' said I,
'Would that I might the kernel spy!'
A narrower circle then I reach'd,
Where sang a few and many preach'd
Of life immortal. 'But,' I said,
'The riddle yet I have not read.
Life I must know, that care I may
For life in me to last for aye.'
Then he, 'Those voices are a charm
To keep yon dove-cot out of harm.'
In the centre, then, he show'd a tent
Where, laughing safe, a woman bent
Over her babe, and, her above,
Lean'd in his turn a graver love.
'Behold the two idolatries
By which,' cried he, 'the world defies
Chaos and death, and for whose sake
All else must war and work and wake.'

A DREAM.

AMID the mystic fields of Love
I wander'd, and beheld a grove.
Breathlessly still was part, and part
Was breathing with an easy heart;
And there below, in lamblike game,
Were virgins, all so much the same,
That each was all. A youth drew nigh,
And on them gazed with wandering eye,
And would have pass'd, but that a maid,
Clapping her hands above her, said,
'My time is now!' and laughing ran
After the dull and strange young man,
And bade him stop and look at her.
And so he call'd her lovelier
Than any else, only because
She only then before him was.
And, while they stood and gazed, a change
Was seen in both, diversely strange:
The youth was ever more and more
That good which he had been before;
But the glad maiden grew and grew
Such that the rest no longer knew
Their sister, who was now to sight
The young man's self, yet opposite,
As the outer rainbow is the first,
But weaker, and the hues reversed.
And whereas, in the abandon'd grove,
The virgin round the Central Love

Had blindly circled in her play,
Now danced she round her partner's way;
And, as the earth the moon's, so he
Had the responsibility
Of her diviner motion. 'Lo,'
He sang, and the heavens began to glow,
'The pride of personality,
Seeking its highest, aspires to die,
And in unspeakably profound
Humiliation Love is crown'd!
And from his exaltation still
Into his ocean of good-will
He curiously casts the lead
To find strange depths of lowlihead.'
To one same tune, but higher, 'Bold,'
The maiden sang, 'is Love! For cold
On Earth are blushes, and for shame
Of such an ineffectual flame
As ill consumes the sacrifice!'

THE YEAR.

THE crocus, while the days are dark,
  Unfolds its saffron sheen ;
At April's touch, the crudest bark
  Discovers gems of green.

Then sleep the seasons, full of might ;
  While slowly swells the pod
And rounds the peach, and in the night
  The mushroom bursts the sod.

The Winter falls ; the frozen rut
  Is bound with silver bars ;
The snow-drift heaps against the hut,
  And night is pierc'd with stars.

EROS.

BRIGHT thro' the valley gallops the brooklet;
Over the welkin travels the cloud;
Touch'd by the zephyr, dances the harebell;
Cuckoo sits somewhere, singing so loud;
Two little children, seeing and hearing,
Hand in hand wander, shout, laugh, and sing:
Lo, in their bosoms, wild with the marvel,
Love, like the crocus, is come ere the Spring.
Young men and women, noble and tender,
Yearn for each other, faith truly plight,
Promise to cherish, comfort and honour;
Vow that makes duty one with delight.
Oh, but the glory, found in no story,
Radiance of Eden unquench'd by the Fall;
Few may remember, none may reveal it,
This the first first-love, the first love of all!

MA BELLE.

FAREWELL, dear Heart! Since needs it must
I go,
Dear Heart, farewell!
Fain would I stay, but that I love thee so.
One kiss, ma Belle!
What hope lies in the Land we do not know,
Who, Dear, can tell?
But thee I love, and let thy 'plaint be, 'Lo,
He loved me well!'

REGINA CŒLI.

Say, did his sisters wonder what could Joseph see
In a mild, silent little Maid like thee?
And was it awful, in that narrow house,
With God for Babe and Spouse?
Nay, like thy simple, female sort, each one
Apt to find Him in Husband and in Son,
Nothing to thee came strange in this.
Thy wonder was but wondrous bliss:
Wondrous, for, though
True Virgin lives not but does know,
(Howbeit none ever yet confess'd,)
That God lies really in her breast,
Of thine He made His special nest!
And so
All mothers worship little feet,
And kiss the very ground they've trod;
But, ah, thy little Baby sweet
Who was indeed thy God!

KING COPHETUA THE FIRST.

SAID Jove within himself one day,
'I'll make me a mistress out of clay!
These ninefold spheres of chiming quires,
Though little things and therefore sweet,
Too Godlike are for my desires:
My pleasure still is incomplete.
The gust of love is mystery,
Which poorly yet the heavens supply.
Now where may God for mystery seek
Save in the earthly, small, and weak?
My work, then, let me crown and end
With what I ne'er shall comprehend!'
And so the unfathomable Need,
Hell's mock, Heaven's pity, was decreed.
And, with perversity immense
As all his other affluence,
Jove left his wondering Court behind
And Juno's almost equal mind,
On low and little Earth to seek
That vessel infinitely weak,
(The abler for the infinite honour
He hugely long'd to put upon her,)
And, in a melancholy grove,
Found sighing his predestined Love,
A pretty, foolish, pensive maid,
The least of heaven-related things,
Of every boy and beast afraid,
But not of him, the King of Kings.

He look'd so measurelessly mild,
And so he flatter'd her, poor child,
By lifting with respect her hand
To his salute benign and grand,
That, when he spoke, and begged to be
Instructed in her wishes, she,
Having a modest minute tarried,
Lisp'd, 'I should like, Sire, to be married.'
But, when he smiling ask'd, 'Whom to?'
She blush'd and said, she scarcely knew.
Then Jove named Shepherds, Lords, and Kings
To her free choice; for all such things
Were his and his to give; but these
She shook her curls at. 'Hard to please
Is my small Cousin, but my nod
Shall call from heaven some splendid God—'
'Ah, Maker mine, no God will do
That's not as great a God as you!'
Thereat Jove laugh'd: 'As least of things
Alone can sate the King of Kings,
So the least thing, it seems, that I
Alone of Gods can satisfy!'
And, fading in her flushing arms,
He blazed for ever from her charms.
Thenceforth the maiden sang and shone,
Admired by all and woo'd by none,
For, though she said she was a sinner,
'Twas clear to all that Jove was in her,
And, but for that deep pagan night,
She would have been a Carmelite.

THE OPEN SECRET.

THE Heavens repeat no other Song,
And, plainly or in parable,
The Angels trust, in each man's tongue,
The Treasure's safety to its size.
In shameful Hell
The Lily in last corruption lies,
Where known 'tis, rotten-lily-wise,
By the strange foulness of the smell.
Earth, that, in this arcanum, spies
Proof of high kinship unconceiv'd,
By all desired and disbeliev'd,
Shews fancies, in each thing that is,
Which nothing mean, not meaning this,
Yea, does from her own law, to hint it, err,
As 'twere a trust too huge for her.
Maiden and Youth pipe wondrous clear
The tune they are the last to hear.
'Tis the strange gem in Pleasure's cup.
Physician and Philosopher,
In search of acorns, plough it up,
But count it nothing 'mong their gains;
Nay, call it pearl, they'd answer, 'Lo,
Blest Land where pearls as large as pumpkins grow!'
And would not even rend you for your pains.
To tell men truth, yet keep them dark
And shooting still beside the mark,
God, as in jest, gave to their wish,

The Sign of Jonah and the Fish.
'Tis the name new, on the white stone,
To none but them that have it known;
And even these can scarce believe, but cry,
'When turn'd was Sion's captivity,
Then were we, yea, and yet we seem
Like them that dream!'
In Spirit 'tis a punctual ray
Of peace that sheds more light than day;
In Will and Mind
'Tis the easy path so hard to find;
In Heart, a pain not to be told,
Were words mere honey, milk, and gold;
I' the Body 'tis the bag of the bee;
In all, the present, thousandfold amends
Made to the sad, astonish'd life
Of him that leaves house, child, and wife,
And on God's 'hest, almost despairing, wends,
As little guessing as the herd
What a strange Phœnix of a bird
Builds in this tree,
But only intending all that He intends.
To this, the Life of them that live,
If God would not, thus far, give tongue,
Ah, why did He his secret give
To one that has the gift of song?
But all He does He doubtless means,
And, if the Mystery that smites Prophets dumb
Here, to the grace-couch'd eyes of some,
Shapes to its living face the clinging shroud,
Perchance the Skies grow tired of screens,
And 'tis His Advent in the Cloud.

THE THREE WITNESSES.

MUSING I met, in no strange land,
What meet thou must to understand :
An Angel. There was none but he,
Yet 'twas a glorious company.
God, Youth, and Goddess, one, twain, trine,
In altering wedlock flamed benign.
The Youth i' the midst did shadowy seem,
Till merged in either blest extreme,
But could, by choosing, each way turn,
And, with God, for the Goddess burn,
Or vanish in the Goddess quite,
To be, with her, the God's delight ;
And, whether he chose Hers or His,
He glow'd at once with either's bliss.
The head was Godhead without guile,
A solar force, an infant's smile ;
Breasted the Wonder was and loin'd
With Man and Woman's beauties join'd ;
And thence, O, moonlike and most sweet,
The Goddess brighten'd to the feet,
Which, when they felt the one the other,
Felt each like Cupid and his Mother.
Unwearying, since I caught that sight,
Him have I praised by whose word's might
The Heavens and the Earth did breathe
And the gay Waters underneath.

VENUS AND DEATH.

With fetters gold her captivated feet
Lay, sunny sweet;
In that palm was the poppy, Sleep; in this
The apple, Bliss;
Against the mild side of his Spouse and Mother
One small God throve, and in't, meseem'd, another.
By these a Death-in-Life did foully breathe
Out of a face that was one grate of teeth.
Lift, O kind Angels, lift her eyelids loth,
Lest he devour her and her Godlets both!

THE KISS.

In arms and policy and books
Prince Victor was a Prince indeed.
Amanda, Princess of sweet looks,
Of such things had no heed.
But once, both acting in a Play,
Victor, who found it in his Part,
Gave the cold Maid, with all his heart,
A kiss which took her breath away;
And, thenceforth, they were hand and glove,
He Prince in arms, books, policy,
Prince of Amanda too, and she
A little, laughing flame of love.
'Arms, policy and books must go,'
He sigh'd, 'since she loves kisses so!'
But she, his bee by honey caught,
Would only now her sweetness yield
For meed of arduous honour, sought
In Study, Parliament, or Field.
And ever thus from kisses grow
The thoughts that soar 'bove kisses so!

MIGNONNE.

WHATE'ER thou dost thou'rt dear.
Uncertain troubles sanctify
That magic well-spring of the willing tear,
Thine eye.
Thy jealous fear,
With not the rustle of a rival near;
Thy careless disregard of all
My tenderest care;
Thy dumb despair
When thy keen wit my worship may construe
Into contempt of thy divinity;
They please me too!
But should it once befall
These accidental charms to disappear,
Leaving withal
Thy sometime self the same throughout the year,
So glowing, grave and shy,
Kind, talkative and dear
As now thou sitt'st to ply
The fireside tune
Of that neat engine deft at which thou sew'st
With fingers mild and foot like the new moon,
O, then what cross of any further fate
Could my content abate?
Forget, then, (but I know
Thou canst not so,)
Thy customs of some prædiluvian state.
I am no Bullfinch, fair my Butterfly,

That thou should'st try
Those zigzag courses, in the welkin clear;
Nor cruel Boy that, fledd'st thou straight
Or paused, mayhap
Might catch thee, for thy colours, with his cap.

ALEXANDER AND LYCON.

'WHAT, no crown won,
These two whole years,
By man of fortitude beyond his peers,
In Thrace or Macedon?'
'No, none.
But what deep trouble does my Lycon feel,
And hide 'neath chat about the commonweal?'
'Glaucé but now the third time did again
The thing which I forbade. I had to box her ears.
'Twas ill to see her both blue eyes
Settled in tears
Despairing on the skies,
And the poor lip all pucker'd into pain;
Yet, for her sake, from kisses to refrain!'
'Ho, Timocles, take down
That crown.
No, not that common one for blood with extreme valour spilt,
But yonder, with the berries gilt.
'Tis, Lycon, thy just meed.
To inflict unmoved
And firm to bear the woes of the Beloved
Is fortitude indeed.'

SEMELE.

No praise to me!
My joy 'twas to be nothing but the glass
Thro' which the general boon of Heaven should pass,
To focus upon thee.
Nor is't thy blame
Thou first should'st glow, and, after, fade i' the flame.
It takes more might
Than God has given thee, Dear, so long to feel delight.
Shall I, alas,
Reproach thee with thy change and my regret?
Blind fumblers that we be
About the portals of felicity!
The wind of words would scatter, tears would wash
Quite out the little heat
Beneath the silent and chill-seeming ash,
Perchance, still slumbering sweet.

A RETROSPECT.

I, TRUSTING that the truly sweet
  Would still be sweetly found the true,
Sang, darkling, taught by heavenly heat,
  Songs which were wiser than I knew.
To the unintelligible dream
  That melted like a gliding star,
I said: 'We part to meet, fair Gleam!
  You are eternal, for you *are*.'
To Love's strange riddle, fiery writ
  In flesh and spirit of all create,
'Mocker,' I said, 'of mortal wit,
  Me you shall not mock. I can wait.'

1886.

SELECTIONS

FROM THE

POEMS OF HENRY PATMORE

DIED FEBRUARY 24, 1883. ÆT. 22.

NOTE.

On the day before my son Henry died I told him I would print some of his verses in the next edition of my own. Since then a small volume of his poems has been issued from the private press of the Reverend Henry Daniel, at Oxford. I now take the opportunity of fulfilling my promise more exactly.

C. P.

LAMENT

Of one who could go out only in a bath-chair, the doctor recommending the morning; but once being out on a January afternoon, he felt some sadness at tasting a pleasure which he had almost forgotten.

O LET me, as I ought to, grieve
For loss of thee, dear time of eve;
Let me be thankful as I ought,
For forced remembrance and sad thought.
The quiet passionate evening time
Has been my love and oft my rhyme;
The orient day's divine ascent
I have loved with less of love's content:
More like our life and so more sweet
This time when earth and heaven so meet.

Almost did I—oh sin—forget
The dim delight of the sunset;
The round sun lingering misty red,
Ere in the sea he sinks to bed;
The tremor and the blush upon
The sea, expecting the red sun;
The movement of that hour so still:
The sense that goes before the will,
And thoughts that heavy lag behind,
And bring the quiet to the mind;
And what delights the eye not least,

The gloom of the deserted east,
All empty of the glorious sun,
And darkness seen where morning shone.
The hill, that tip-toe did defy
With rugged head the early sky,
Now, in the gentle mist more great,
Leans down on earth with all its weight ;
And here the old street slumbers deep,
And red-tiled cottages asleep
Look lazy, lost, and quieted
In drowsy dreams of ages dead.
And still the setting light is kind,
And somehow finds its way behind
To where the cottage children play,
Forgetful of the serious day,
And all with serious love intent
On strife that bursts in merriment.
Oh, listen to the noise that's made
Where those thick bushes make thick shade!
The birds have something they must say
Before the light is gone away.

Before the light is gone away
Let love bring joy that loves delay ;
The pensive sister of dear sorrow,
She weeps to-day to laugh to-morrow.
And now no longer do I grieve
For loss of thee, dear time of eve,
Since more than all I lost I find
In this forgiving evening kind,
This dying winter afternoon,
Unlike late-lasting joy of June,
And lovely with a likeness lent
That leaves it less and different.
No little beauty this, though less
Than summer's more than sweet excess ;

No loss, this lovely difference,
That suits it to my present sense.

Seldom and dear to me the sight
Of day adorned to meet the night.
'Tis sweeter now and much more dear
Than former summer evenings were,
When often with surprise I met
The sudden joy of the sunset;
And when the coloured light was gone,
Then joy and I were left alone
In silent conversation free,
And thoughts of things I never see.

MADONNA, lady whom with heavenly fear
I love (so children do their mother dear)
O hear my prayer, my lady often stand
As now, not far, where shadows shew your hand.
Your face I do not see; I see the night
Assumes your shape and shews your hand for white,
And sweetly know how, on your other side,
Another just as softly hangs allied.

FLORA.

O, FOR that afternoon, that lane
Where I picked flowers! Never again
Will common wild-flowers look so well,
So freshly blush the pimpernel,
And modest blue and simple white
Stand in the grass to such delight!
I picked my flowers for Flora's sake,
Happy to have a chance to make

A nosegay she might chance to see,
And know that it was made by me.
I found a baby oak-leaf, too,
So I had green, white, red, and blue.

How loudly moans the unhappy West,
Making the sad sea roar,
The sea that hates the hope of rest
Howling against the shore.

The unhappy sighing of the night,
Ere night has passed, has ceased;
The heaving sea expects the light
That soon shall show the East.

'*Night is the light of my pleasures.*'

All day I sought my lady bright;
I found her in the all-seeing night.
Near me she seemed; I felt no fear,
Nor wished for her to be more near.
Her eyes were downward from me bent,
Forgiving, shunning to resent;
Severest love and anger kind
And warm aversion made her blind.
From her flushed cheeks and covered eyes
And breast too sad to stir with sighs
A movement came through the thick air
Bringing me joy deep as despair.
Silent she sat and still and sad,
With all her brightness blackly clad;
A golden cross burned on her breast,
Where passions were opposed in rest.

EUCHARIS.

THERE with delight Love lives,
And to his secret wonders gives
Their nature and their own sweet way,
And lets them startle dreamy day.
There heaven on heaven is always free
To eyes that dare not look to see;
And worlds unknown lie not unguessed,
Concealed and sweetly manifest.
No word profane nor conscious thought
Can find the secret, felt unsought,
By men and innocent angels feared
Of blind Love where he lies insphered.

THE thing that makes me patriot most,
Too country-proud to care to boast,
Is not th' imperial thought whose pain
Still honours things by Gladstone slain;
And though the English women are
The pride of peace which wins in war,
And that one who is all my pride
In England seems personified;—
The land itself from which she sprung,
These very fields I walk among,
These hills whose sides and gentle tops
Are lit with woods and hung with hops,
Those yellow tracts, and near them seen
So many tints from brown to green,—
This is my country, this the love
No wish can haunt, no pain reprove.

THE ANGEL'S ALMANAC.

ONCE, only once, and long ago,
One moment which the angels know,—
They keep it in their calendar,
Which calls the sun-lit earth a star,—
One moment, once, my Flora's eye
Met mine with maiden motion shy,
And one large look, all armed with truth
And curious candour, judged my youth,
And said, 'As plain as eyes can see,
I see your soul as you see me;'
Her open eyes were like the beach
Where brown with white, each lighting each,
Lie mixed, or like the brown bright sand,
Where bright surf hurries to the land.

THE truth is male, and females shy
Come near it with a careful lie.

AGLAIA.

THE tamarisks bowed their heads, compelled
By no ungentle force;
The breeze a sunny fragrance held,
Mingled of sea and gorse;
And on the turf the daisies shone;
The heaving turf's desire
Was plainly to be trodden on;
The daisies were on fire
For something far more pure and warm
Than they; and on them there
I, for a moment, saw thy form
Rise in the happy air.

APPENDIX

ESSAY ON ENGLISH METRICAL LAW

NOTE.

THIS Essay was first printed, almost as it now stands, in the year 1856. I have seen with pleasure that, since then, its main principles have been quietly adopted by most writers on the subject in periodicals and elsewhere.

1886.

APPENDIX.

ESSAY ON ENGLISH METRICAL LAW.

THE adoption, by Surrey and his immediate successors, of certain foreign metres into our poetry, and the unprecedented attempt of that accomplished writer to establish 'blank verse' as a narrative vehicle, first aroused conscious and scientific interest in the subject of the mechanism of English verse. From that time to this, the nature of modern verse has been a favourite problem of enthusiasts who love to dive in deep waters for diving's sake. A vast mass of nondescript matter has been brought up from the recesses visited, but no one has succeeded in rendering any sufficient account of this secret of the intellectual deep. I have made it my business to ascertain whether any of the musical grammarians, whose science is, in great part, a mere abstraction of the laws of metre, have supplied the deficiencies of the prosodians. The sum total of my inquiries in both fields of criticism, musical and poetical, amounts to this, that upon few other subjects has so much been written with so little tangible result. Without for a moment questioning the value of certain portions of the writings of Puttenham, Gascoigne, Campion, Webbe, Daniel, Crowe, Foster,

Mitford, Guest, and others, it must be confessed that no one of these writers renders anything like a full and philosophical account of the subject; and that, with the exception of Daniel, the admirable author of the 'Civil Wars,' and Mitford, none has treated the question, even on the superficial ground in most cases assumed, with the combined ability and competence of information from which alone any important fruit can be looked for in such investigations. George Puttenham's 'Art of English Poesy' is by very much the most bulky and laborious of the early metrical essays; but at least nine-tenths of this book consist of as unprofitable writing as ever spoilt paper. His chapter on the arrangement of rhymes to form staves is worthy of the poetical student's attention; and there is in the outset of his work an explicit acknowledgment of the fact, so often lost sight of by his successors, that English verse is not properly measurable by the rules of Latin and Greek verse. Indeed, the early poetical critics commonly manifest a much clearer discernment of the main importance of rhyme and accentual stress, in English verse, than is to be found among later writers. Their views are, for the most part, far from being expressed with that positiveness and appearance of system characterising the school of critics which received its data from Pope and his compeers; but they are, upon the whole, considerably more in accordance with the true spirit of English verse, as it appears in its highest excellence in the writings of the poets of Elizabeth and James. The dissertations of the second class of critics, of whom Foster was the best example, are rendered comparatively useless by the adoption of false or confused opinions as the groundwork of their theories;

such, for instance, as Foster's assumption that the time of syllables in English keeps the proportion usually attributed to long and short quantities in Greek and Latin, and that the metrical ictus or stress in English is identical with elevation of tone ;—mistakes which seem also to have been made by Dr. Johnson in the prosody prefixed to his Dictionary, and by various other writers of his time. Joshua Steele has the praise of having propounded more fully than had hitherto been done, the true view of metre, as being primarily based upon isochronous division by ictuses or accents ; and he, for the first time, clearly declared the necessity of measuring pauses in minutely scanning English verse. He remarked the strong pause which is required for the proper delivery of adjacent accented syllables, and without which the most beautiful verses must often be read into harsh prose. But the just and important views of this writer were mingled with so much that was erroneous and impracticable, that they made little or no general impression. Mitford's careful work on the Harmony of Language is perhaps the most significant book which has appeared upon the subject. This work, though far from containing the whole, or the unmixed truth, has not yet been superseded by any of the several elaborate essays on the same theme which have since appeared. Mr. Guest's work on English Rhythms is a laborious and, in some respects, valuable performance ; but many of his observations indicate an ear defective to a degree which seriously impairs their value, when they concern the more subtle kinds of metrical effect. The value of his work is further diminished by a singular unskilfulness in the mode of arranging his materials, and

communicating his views. He has fallen into the great error of endeavouring to simplify and abbreviate his statements by adopting, for the indication of different species of verse, a notation which few persons can fairly be called upon to take the pains to comprehend and follow.

The radical faults of nearly all the writers I have mentioned, and of those who have followed in their steps, are, first, the mistake of working in ignorance of the truth declared by Quintilian, 'that mere literature, without a knowledge of sounds, will not enable a man to treat properly of metre and rhythm;' and, secondly, that of having formed too light an estimate of their subject, whereby they have been prevented from sounding deep enough for the discovery of the philosophical grounds and primary laws of metrical expression. No one, with any just sense of the exalted but unobtrusive functions of art, will expect to derive much artistic instruction from the writings of men who set about their work, perhaps their life's work, with such sentiments as Dr. Burney was not ashamed to avow at the commencement of that laborious treatise which is still deservedly a text-book of musical history: 'I would rather be pronounced trivial than tiresome; for music being, at best, but an amusement, its history merits not, in reading, the labour of intense application.' And again: 'What is music? An innocent luxury, unnecessary indeed to existence, but a great improvement and gratification to our sense of hearing.'

The nature of the relation between the poet's peculiar mode of expression and the matter expressed has engaged the curiosity of many philosophic minds. Hegel, whose chapters on music

and metre contain by far the most satisfactory piece of writing I know of on the subject, admirably observes, that versification affords a necessary counterpoise to the great spiritualisation of language in poetry. 'It is false,' he adds, 'that versification offers any obstacle to the free outpouring of poetic thought. True genius disposes with ease of sensible materials, and moves therein as in a native element, which, instead of depressing or hindering, exalts and supports its flight.' Art, indeed, must have a body as well as a soul; and the higher and purer the spiritual, the more powerful and unmistakable should be the corporeal element;—in other words, the more vigorous and various the life, the more stringent and elaborate must be the law by obedience to which life expresses itself.

The co-ordination of life and law, in the matter and form of poetry, determines the different degrees and kinds of metre, from the half-prosaic dramatic verse to the extremest elaboration of high lyric metres. The quality of all emotion which is not ignoble is to boast of its allegiance to law. The limits and decencies of ordinary speech will by no means declare high and strong feelings with efficiency. These must have free use of all sorts of figures and latitudes of speech; such latitudes as would at once be perceived by a delicately constituted mind to be lax and vicious, without the shackles of artistic form. What in prose would be shrieks and vulgar hyperbole, is transmuted by metre into graceful and impressive song. This effect of metre has often been alluded to, with more or less exactness of thought and expression. 'Bacon,' says Mr. Dallas, 'regards metre as a curb or shackle, where everything else is riot and lawless revelling; Wordsworth regards it as a

mark of order, and so an assurance of reality needed in such an unusual state of mind as he takes poetry to be; and Coleridge would trace it to the balance struck between our passions and spontaneous efforts to hold them in check.' From the truth which is implied alike in these several propositions, an important and neglected corollary follows: metre ought not only to exist as the becoming garment of poetic passion, but, furthermore, it should continually make its existence recognised. Some writers, by a peculiar facility of language, have attained to write perfect metre with almost as little metrical effect as if it were prose. Now this is no merit, but very much the reverse. The language should always seem to *feel*, though not to *suffer from* the bonds of verse. The very deformities produced, really or apparently, in the phraseology of a great poet, by the confinement of metre, are beautiful, exactly for the same reasons that in architecture justify the bossy Gothic foliage, so unlike Nature, and yet, indeed, in its place and purpose as art, so much more beautiful than Nature. Metre never attains its noblest effects when it is altogether unproductive of those beautiful exorbitancies on the side of law. Milton and Shakspeare are full of them; and we may declare the excellence of these effects without danger to the poorer proprieties of the lower walks of art, since no small poet can originate them, or even copy them, without making himself absurd. Wordsworth's erroneous critical views of the necessity of approximating the language of poetry, as much as possible, to that of prose, especially by the avoidance of grammatical inversions, arose from his having overlooked the necessity of manifesting, as well as moving in, the bonds of verse.

In the finest specimens of versification, there seems to be a perpetual conflict between the law of the verse and the freedom of the language, and each is incessantly, though insignificantly, violated for the purpose of giving effect to the other. The best poet is not he whose verses are the most easily scanned, and whose phraseology is the commonest in its materials, and the most direct in its arrangement; but rather he whose language combines the greatest imaginative accuracy with the most elaborate and sensible metrical organisation, and who, in his verse, preserves everywhere the living sense of metre, not so much by unvarying obedience to, as by innumerable small departures from, its *modulus*. The over-smooth and 'accurate' metre of much of the eighteenth century poetry, to an ear able to appreciate the music of Milton and the best parts of Coleridge, is almost as great a defect as the entire dissolution of metre displayed by some of the writers of our own century.

The reader will already have discovered that I am writing under a conviction that the musical and metrical expression of emotion is an instinct, and not an artifice. Were the vulgar and infantine delight in rhythm insufficient to justify that conviction, history itself would prove it. The earliest writings of all nations possessing regularly constituted languages have been rhythmical in that high degree which takes the form of verse. 'Verse,' as Ellis well observes, 'is anterior to prose, because our passions are anterior to reason and judgment; because vocal sounds are the natural expression of emotion, not of reflection.' On examination, however, it will be found that the most ordinary speaking involves the musical and metrical element in an easily appreciable degree, and as an integral part

of language, and that this element commonly assumes conspicuousness and importance in proportion to the amount of emotion intended to be expressed. Metre, in the primary degree of a simple series of isochronous intervals, marked by accents, is as natural to spoken language as an even pace is natural to walking. Prose delivery, without this amount of metre, is like a drunkard's walk, the irregularity of which is so far from being natural to a person in his senses, that it is not even to be imitated without effort. Now, as dancing is no more than an increase of the element of measure which already exists in walking, so verse is but an additional degree of that metre which is inherent in prose speaking. Again, as there is this difference between prose and verse generically, so the same difference gives rise to specific kinds of prose and of verse; and the prose of a common law report differs from that of an impassioned piece of oratory, just in the same way that the semi-prosaic dramatic verse differs from an elaborate lyric. This is no new doctrine; it is as old as criticism. Cicero writes, 'Mira est enim natura vocis: cujus quidem è tribus omnino sonis, inflexo, acuto, gravi, tanta sit et tam suavis varietas perfecta in cantibus: *est autem in dicendo etiam quidem cantus obscurior.*' And, again, Quintilian, 'Nihil est prosa scriptum quod non redigi possit in quædam versiculorum genera.'

The metrical and musical law in prose has been disregarded and forgotten, because its nature is so simple that its observance may be safely trusted to instinct, and requires no aid from typographical divisions. Probably many of my readers will feel as much surprised at learning that they have been speaking in metre all their lives, as the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* felt on being told that he was, with-

out instruction, in the habit of talking prose. I certainly cannot expect them to believe so startling a proposition upon my mere assertion: I must allege a few proofs, premising, however, that the *melody*, or element of *tone* in language, is so inseparably connected with its *metre* or *time*, that the two things will scarcely consent to be considered separately. By the metre and melody of prose, I of course mean the metre and melody which exists in the common and intelligible delivery of it. Verse itself is only verse on the condition of right reading: we may, if we choose, read the most perfect verse so that all the effect of verse shall be lost. The same thing may be done with prose. We may clearly articulate all the syllables, and preserve their due connection in the phrases they constitute; and yet, by neglecting to give them their relative tones, and to group them according to time, convert them from prose into something nameless, absurd, and unintelligible. So far is it from being true that the time and tone of prose reading and speaking are without law, that their laws are more strict than those of grammar itself. There are never two equally good ways of reading a sentence, though there may be half a dozen of writing it. If one and the same sentence is readable in more than one way, it is because it has more than one possible meaning. 'Shall you walk out to-day?' is a question which may be asked with as many variations of stress and tone as there are words in it; but every variation involves a variation of meaning.

The isochronous division of common spoken language, though quite as natural, necessary, and spontaneously observed as the laws of inflection, is more difficult to prove, by reason of the difficulty

which most persons must experience when they for the first time attempt at once to speak naturally, and to take note of the time in which they speak. To those who believe that verse is itself founded on measure, it will be sufficient to point out the fact, that there is no necessary distinction between the right reading of prose and that of verse, as there would be were the primary degree of measure, whereby a verse is divisible into a certain number of 'feet' or 'bars,' artificial. Thus, on meeting in prose with such a passage as 'Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace,' which is an exquisitely cadenced 'iambic tetrameter brachycatalectic,' we give the entire metrical effect in the ordinary reading. An argument of wider power of influence is, however, to be discovered from the consideration of a passage like the following, which, while it refuses to be read into verse, differs greatly from the ordinary character of English prose:—'These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear. Clouds they are without water, carried about of winds: trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit; twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, unto whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.' Probably there is not one unpractised reader in ten but would feel slightly embarrassed by having to read this passage of St. Jude aloud for the first time. The meaning is nevertheless plain; the places of all but one or two of the accents are unmistakable; so that, if stress and tone without measured time were the only points requiring to be given in prose reading, everybody would read it off properly at once. The peculiarity of the passage, however, consists in its

singular departure from the metrical constitution of ordinary English phrases, which exhibit a great preponderance of emphatic and unemphatic syllables in consecutive couples, whereas here the accents fall, for the most part, either upon adjacent syllables, or upon every third syllable,—an arrangement requiring an exceedingly bold and emphatic style of delivery, *in order to sever accent from accent by equal measures of time.* Adjacent accents occur so seldom, that bad readers are apt to sink one of them when they do occur, or at least to abbreviate the decided intervening pause, which the ear, even of the reader who neglects to give it, must instinctively crave.

The dependence of metre upon this primary and natural division of language by accents may be adopted as a fact which has been recognised with more or less distinctness by all critics who have written on the subject to any purpose. Yet, strange to say, the nature of accent itself has puzzled the brains even of those who have spoken most clearly concerning its metrical functions.

The word 'accent' is notorious for the variety of meanings which have been attached to it. We are of course chiefly interested in its meaning as it is concerned in English and most modern European verse, and it is only in this regard that it is afflicted with apparently incurable ambiguity of significance. It is commonly allowed now that the Greek accent was a matter of tone exclusively. With us, the places of the *metrical* accent or 'ictus'—of the accent in the sense of change of tone,—and of long quantity, coincide; with the Greeks, the separation of these elements of verse was not only permissible, but sought after; and the ictus, accent, quantity, and verbal cæsura advanced, as in were,

in parallel order. Hegel rightly says, that 'to feel the beauty of the rhythm on all these sides at once, is, for our ear, a great difficulty.' It is indeed a difficulty which seems never truly to have been overcome by any modern reader of Greek verse, and it is probably one which could not be overcome by less than the life's habituation which every Greek had. Most people find it hard to believe what they cannot easily represent to their senses; and the fact of the above diversity is sometimes even now shirked, or confusedly admitted, by metrical critics. Mitford, however, very justly remarks, that the difficulty in question, though next to insurmountable, is not greater than that which a Frenchman ordinarily finds in regard to English versification. It is also worth observing, that although such separation is absolutely opposed to the rule of our speech, this rule is nevertheless broken by exceptions which serve at least to render the practice of shifting the metrical ictus from one place in a word to another, and of severing 'accent,' in the sense of tone, from long quantity, quite intelligible. Thus, our poets claim the privilege of setting the stress on either syllable of the word 'sometimes,' according to the requirements of the verse; and the vulgar practice of dwelling long on the first syllables of '*prodigious*, *miraculous*,' etc., may convince the most sceptical that elevation of tone and ictus have no *necessary* association with long quantity: for such pronunciation in no way diminishes the decision of the ictus and the elevation of the tone upon the succeeding syllables.

Here let me call attention to a mistake which seems always to have been made concerning 'accent,' even under the acceptation of *tone*. The

'*acute* accent' is always spoken of as if it had a permanent position in polysyllables; the fact being, that the accent is necessarily 'acute,' or *high*, only so long as the word stands without context or relative signification, in which case the acute accent is always used as being, in English, generally indicative of that which is most positive and characteristic in the constitution of the word. But there is no 'acute' which is not liable to be converted into a 'grave' by grammatical position. In this question and answer,—'Shall Mary go?' 'No, not Mary,'—the first syllable of the word 'Mary' is in one case acute, and in the other grave; but in each case alike, the syllable is fully accented. This significative property of change of tone is evidently not the accident of any language, or group of languages: it lies at the foundation of the idea of music of all kinds, and a permanent tone dwelling on certain words would render poetry and song impossible. It cannot therefore be doubted, that, in every language, ancient and modern, as in our own, grammatical isolation is the condition of the permanent acute, and that, consequently, the compound change of tone, called the 'circumflex' accent, is, in composition, as liable to commence with a fall as with a rise.

Let me now ask, What do we mean by 'accent,' as the word is commonly used in speaking of its function in English verse?—for I may dismiss the Greek meaning as being well defined in its independence of ours, which, whatever it is, is certainly not *pure tone*. Some writers have identified our metrical accent with long quantity; others have placed it in relative loudness; others have fancied it to consist, like the Greek, in pure tone; others have regarded it as a compound of loudness

and elevation of tone; and others, as a compound of height and duration of tone; others, again, have regarded it as the general prominence acquired by one syllable over another, by any or all of these elements in combination. Now, it seems to me that the only tenable view of that accent upon which it is allowed, with more or less distinctness, by all, that English metre depends, in contra-distinction to the syllabic metre of the ancients, is the view which attributes to it the function of marking, *by whatever means*, certain isochronous intervals. Metre implies something measured; an assertion which sounds like a truism; but to a person much read in our metrical critics, it will probably seem a startling novelty. It is one, however, which can afford to stand without any further recommendation than its obvious merits, for the present. The thing measured is the time occupied in the delivery of a series of words. But time measured implies something that measures, *and is therefore itself unmeasured;* an argument before which those who hold that English accent and long quantity are identical must bow. These are two indispensable conditions of metre,—first, that the sequence of vocal utterance, represented by written verse, shall be divided into equal or proportionate spaces; secondly, *that the fact of that division shall be made manifest* by an 'ictus' or 'beat,' actual or mental, which, like a post in a chain railing, shall mark the end of one space, and the commencement of another. This 'ictus' is an acknowledged condition of all possible metre; and its function is, of course, much more conspicuous in languages so chaotic in their syllabic quantities as to render it the *only* source of metre. Yet, all-important as this time-beater is, I think it

demonstrable that, for the most part, *it has no material and external existence at all*, but has its place in the mind, which craves measure in everything, and, wherever the idea of measure is uncontradicted, delights in marking it with an imaginary 'beat.' The Greeks, it appears, could tolerate, and even delight, in that which, to our ear, would confuse and contradict measure. Our habits require that everything which gives preponderance to a syllable shall, as a rule, be concentrated upon one, in order to render it duly capable of the mental 'ictus.' Those qualities which, singly, or in various combination, have hitherto been declared to *be* accent, are indeed only *the conditions of accent;* a view which derives an invincible amount of corroboration from its answering exactly to the character and conditions of accent in vocal and instrumental music, of which the laws cannot be too strictly attended to, if we would arrive at really satisfactory conclusions concerning modern European metre. People are too apt to fancy they are employing a figure of speech when they talk of the music of poetry. The word 'music' is in reality a much more accurate expression for that which delights us in good verse, apart from the meaning, than the word 'rhythm,' which is commonly employed by those who think to express themselves with greater propriety. Rhythm, when the term is not meant to be synonymous with a combination of varied tone and measured time, must signify an abstraction of the merely metrical character extremely difficult to realise, on account of the curious, though little noticed, tendency of the mind to connect the idea of tone with that of time or measure. There is no charm in the rhythm of monotones, unless the notion of mono-

tone can be overcome ; and, when that is the case, it is not rhythm, but rhythmical melody, whereby we are pleased. If Grétry, when a child, danced to the pulsations of a waterfall, it was because his fancy abolished their monotony. The ticking of a clock is truly monotonous ; but when we listen to it, we hear, or rather seem to hear, two, or even four, distinct tones, upon the imaginary distinction of which, and the equally imaginary emphasis of one or two, depends what we call its rhythm. In the case of the beat of a drum, this ideal apprehension of tone is still more remarkable : in imitating its tattoo, the voice expresses what the mind imagines, and, in doing so, employs several varieties of tone. In all such cases, however, the original sounds, though monotonous, are far from being pure monotones ; they are metrical recurrences of the same *noise*, rather than the same tone ; and it is very interesting to observe, that we cannot evoke what we thus erroneously term 'rhythm' from the measured repetition of a perfectly pure tone. The tattoo of a knuckle upon the table will lose most, if not all, of its rhythm, if transferred to a bell. The drum gives 'rhythm ;' but the clear note of the 'triangle' is nothing without another instrument, *because it does not admit of an imagined variation.*

The relation of music to language ought to be recognised as something more than that of similarity, if we would rightly appreciate either. 'The musical art,' says G. Weber, 'consists in the expression of feelings by means of tones.' Now, all feelings have relation to thoughts or facts which may be stated, or at least suggested, in words ; and the union of descriptive words with an expressive variation and measurement of tones,

constitutes, according to the amount and kind of feeling, and the truth of its vocal expression, song, poetry, and even the most ordinary spoken language. *Perfect poetry and song are, in fact, nothing more than perfect speech upon high and moving subjects;* a truth upon which Grétry, one of the soundest, as well as by very much the most amusing of modern musical critics, inferentially insists, when he says, 'Il est une musique qui ayant pour base la declamation des paroles, est vraie comme les passions,' which is as much as to say, that there is no right melody which is not so founded. And again, 'La parole est un bruit ou le chant est renfermé;' a statement which is the converse of the other, and amounts to a charge of imperfection against our ordinary modes of speaking, in so far as, when concerned with the expression of the feelings, they do not amount to pure song. Who has not heard entire sentences, and even series of sentences, so spoken by women, who are usually incomparably better speakers than men, as to constitute a strain of melody which might at once be written down in notes, and played, but with no increase of musical effect, on the piano? Where was the 'bruit' in Rachel's delivery of an impassioned passage of Racine? Her rendering of such passages was not commonly recognised as pure song because, in modern times (it was not so with the Greeks), song, by having been long regarded as an 'artificial' mode of expression, has fallen into extravagance and falsehood, and is now very rarely 'vrai comme les passions.' Modern singing and modern declamation, as a rule, are equally far removed from that just medium at which they coalesce and become one. In song, we have gradually fallen into the adoption of an extent of

scale, and a diversity of time, which is simply *nonsensical;* for such variations of tone and time correspond to no depths or transitions of feeling of which the human breast is cognisant. The *permanent* popular instinct, which is ever the best test of truth in art, recognises the falsehood of these extremes; and Grétry well asks, 'N'avons nous pas remarqué que les airs les plus connus sont ceux qui embrassent le moins d'espace, le moins de notes, le plus court diapason? Voyez, presque tous les airs que le temps a respectés, il sont dans ce cas.' The musical shortcomings of ordinary recitation are not nearly so inexcusable as the extravagancies of most modern song. *Perfect* readers of high poetry are as rare as fine singers and good composers, for the sufficient reason, that they *are* fine singers and good composers, though they may not suspect it in an age of unnatural divorce of sound and sense. What is commonly accounted good reading—what indeed is such when compared with the inanimate style of most readers—falls immeasurably short of the musical sense of really fine verse. The interval between the veriest mouther and an ordinarily accomplished elocutionist, is scarcely greater than that which separates the latter from the *ideal* actor, who should be able to effect for the poetry of Shakspeare what Rachel did for, here and there, a line of Racine. Hence, few lovers of good poetry care to hear it read or acted; for, although themselves, in all likelihood, quite unable to give such poetry a true and full vocal interpretation, their unexpressed imagination of its music is much higher than their own or any ordinary reading of it would be. Poets themselves have sometimes been very bad readers of their own verses; and it seems not

unlikely that their acute sense of what such reading ought to be, discomposes and discourages them when they attempt to give their musical idea a material realisation. In this matter of the relationship of music and poetry, the voice of theory is corroborated by that of history. 'These two arts,' writes Dr. Burney, 'were at first so intimately connected, and so dependent on each other, that rules for poetry were in general rules for music; and the properties and effects of both were so much confounded together that it is extremely difficult to disentangle them.'

Mitford, and other writers, who have treated of Latin and Greek verse as being 'metrical' and 'temporal,' and of our own as 'rhythmical' and 'accentual,' have fallen into the strange error of not perceiving that these four epithets must apply to all possible kinds of metre, as far as they really are metre; and that, although the non-coincidence of the grammatical with the metrical ictus, and other peculiarities of Greek and Latin verse, give rise to differences in *kind* between these and the English and other modern European modes of *verse*, the difference of *metre* can be only one of degree. It is not to be doubted that 'quantity,' in the ancient composition and delivery of Greek and Latin verse, did involve a stricter measurement of the time of single syllables than subsists in our verse, or in our reading of classical verse, and that a real change did occur in the transition from the 'metrum' of the ancients to the 'rhythmus' of the moderns,—a change represented in Greek verse itself by the famous *versus politici* of Tzetzes; but the only change, as far as regards pure *metre*, which is reconcilable with facts and the nature of the case, is that which consists in rendering

'accentual' division of time the *sole*, instead of merely the *main*, source of metre. In modern verse, those collocations of accented and unaccented syllables which we call 'feet,' are not true measures, as they were, though probably only approximately, in ancient verse. Our verse, for example, delights in the unclassical practice of setting a trochee before an iambus in what we call iambic verse, as—

'For one restraint, Lords of the world beside.'

In the proper delivery of this line, the same time, or very nearly, is allowed to elapse between the first and second, second and third, and third and fourth accents; but between the first and second there is *one* unaccented syllable; between the second and third, *none;* and between the third and fourth there are *two;* consequently, the trochee, '*Lords of*,' and the iambus, '*the world*,' are both temporarily deficient when considered as feet, the two unemphatic syllables, *of the*, being pronounced in the time of one of any of the other three unemphatic syllables in the line. Again—

'Come, see rural felicity,'

is a verse having the full time of four dactyls, the first two being each represented by a single syllable. Our liability to error, through an indiscriminating use of the same names for different things, may be illustrated by the fact, that *the 'feet' which Quintilian says produced the even or common rhythmus, namely, the dactyl and anapæst, with us produce the uneven, or triple, and, on the contrary, the iambus and trochee give our even rhythmus.* The word *foot*, however, may be usefully retained in the criticism of modern verse, inasmuch as it indicates a reality, though not exactly that which is

indicated by it with regard to classical metre. The true meaning of the word for us is to be obtained from attending to its employment by Prinz, Calcott, and other musical writers, who speak of iambic, trochaic, and dactylic *rhythms*. Thus, a strain in 'common time' beginning with the unaccented note, is called iambic; a strain in 'triple time' beginning with two unaccented notes, anapæstic, and so forth. Each rhythm, in verse as in music, has a very distinct character; and it is obviously convenient that we should have a distinguishing term for it, since this is by no means supplied by the general terms, 'common' and 'triple cadence.'

The chief source of confusion in modern writings on metre is the nature of the metrical value of the separate syllables of which feet and cadences are composed. The common notion of an exact proportion inherent in syllables themselves seems to be quite untenable. The time occupied in the actual articulation of a syllable is not necessarily its metrical value. *The time of a syllable in combination, is that which elapses from its commencement to the commencement of the succeeding syllable;* so that the monosyllables, a, as, ask, asks, ask'st, though requiring five degrees of time for their articulation, may have precisely the same temporal value in verse, just as, in music played *staccato* on the pianoforte, the actual duration of sound in a crotchet or a quaver note may be the same, the metrical value depending altogether on the difference of the time which elapses before the commencement of the succeeding note. This may reconcile the fact, noticed by Dionysius and others, that 'one short syllable differs from another short, and one long from another long,' with the apparently contradictory rule, 'Syllaba brevis unius est

temporis, longa vero duorum.' It is furthermore very necessary to be observed, that the equality or proportion of metrical intervals between accent and accent is no more than general and approximate, and that expression in reading, as in singing or playing, admits, and even requires, frequent modifications, too insignificant or too subtle for notation, of the nominal equality of those spaces. In the present day, it is the fashion, not only in music and in poetry, but in all the arts, to seek expression at too great an expense of law, and the most approved style of reading is that which ignores the metre as far as is consistent with the possibility of recognising the verse as verse. It is certain that such reading as this would ill bear me out in my assertion of the metrical isochronism in English and other accentual verse, but the constant presence of a general intention of, and tendency towards the realisation of this character, will assuredly be always manifest in good verse, well read. Not only may metrical intervals differ thus from their nominal equality without destroying measure, but the marking of the measure by the recurrent ictus may be occasionally remitted, the position of the ictus altered, or its place supplied by a pause, without the least offence to a cultivated ear, which rather delights in, than objects to, such remission, inversion, or omission, when there is an emotional motive, as indicating an additional degree of that artistic consciousness, to the expression of which, Hegel traces the very life of metre.

A complete and truly satisfactory metrical analysis of any passage even of classical verse, would include a much fuller consideration of the element of pause than has commonly been given to that subject, even by analysts of modern metre.

In the works of the most authoritative prosodians —in the work of Hermann himself—the various kinds of *catalexis*, and measurable cæsural pause, appear rather as *interruptions* than *subjects* of metrical law. Campion, Joshua Steele, and O'Brien ('Ancient Rhythmical Art Recovered'), have indeed noted middle and final pause as being the subject of measure; but the two former have done so only incidentally, and the latter has failed to obtain the consideration which, with all the deficiencies of his little work, the boldness and partial truth of his views deserve. Unless we are to go directly against the analogy of music, and to regard every verse affected with catalexis (or a deficiency in the number of syllables requisite to make it a full dimeter, trimeter, tetrameter, etc.) as constituting an entire metrical system in itself, which is obviously absurd,[1] we must reckon the missing syllables as substituted by an equivalent pause; and, indeed, in reading catalectic verse, this is what a good reader does by instinct. The idea of metrical sequence between verses is equally contradicted by the notion of 'hypercatalectic verse.' The nine-syllable trochaics, in Lord Tennyson's 'Vision of Sin,' would probably be regarded by prosodians as 'hypercatalectic dimeters;' but the extraordinary pause which is required at the end of every line indicates clearly enough that such verses are really 'trimeters,' the time of *three* syllables being filled with a pause. This pause, when properly rendered, affects the ear as excessive; and therefore the verse, though used three centuries ago by Spenser,

[1] That Hermann falls practically into this absurdity, may be seen from his mode of treating *anacrusis*, or those 'times' which precede the (first) 'arsis:' these 'times' he really excludes from the metre.

has never found a place among our recognised metres.

The cæsural, or middle pause, in some kinds of verse, is of such duration that the verse cannot be rightly scanned without allowing for it. Cæsura plays a less refined part in modern than in ancient versification, but still its office with us is far from unimportant. Much over-refinement and many strange mistakes have been fallen into by theorists and theorising poets in connection with this matter. The most common and injurious of such errors is that of identifying metrical pauses with grammatical stops. Some of the early English poets were at great pains to try the experiment of making these two very different things coincide. Now, one of the most fertile sources of the 'ravishing division' in fine versification is the opposition of these elements—that is to say, the breaking up of a grammatical clause by cæsural pause, whether at the end or in the middle of a verse.

The great magnitude of metrical, as compared with grammatical pauses, seems not to have had so much notice as its curiosity deserves. In beating time to the voice of a good reader of verse, it will be found that the metrical pauses are usually much longer than the longest pauses of punctuation, and that they are almost entirely independent of them. For example, a final pause equal to an entire foot may occur between the nominative and the governed genitive, and, in the same sequence of verses, a grammatical period may occur in the middle of an accentual interval without lengthening its time or diminishing the number of the included syllables. In fact, the 'stops,' or conclusions of grammatical clauses, are rather marked by *tone* than *time*. Even in the reading of prose, the

metrical pauses—for so the pauses between adjacent accents may rightly be called—are of much greater duration than is given to most of the 'stops.'

It is very questionable, indeed, whether English verse has gained by the entire disuse of the cæsural dot, which was always employed, until the middle of the fifteenth century, to indicate the position of the cæsura in those kinds of verse of which a marked cæsura was an essential quality. Of this metrical sign Mr. Guest says, 'No edition of Chaucer and his contemporaries can be complete without it.' The value of the cæsural dot will be at once manifest to every reader on perusing such lines as the following, which have been attributed to Surrey, and of the like of which plenty are to be found in the writings of him and his predecessors and immediate successors :—

'And some I see again sit still, and say but small,
That can do ten times more than they that say they can do all.'

The reader is almost sure to destroy the metre of these lines in his first perusal, for want of an indication of the strong cæsura, equal to a pause of an entire foot, in the first line, on the sixth syllable. In a language like ours, abounding in monosyllables to such a degree, that ten, twenty, thirty, forty, or even fifty of them, may follow in uninterrupted sequence, as in a passage in the third Act of King John, quoted by Mitford, this assistance is absolutely required in verses exceeding the length of the common 'heroic;' and the consequence of its disuse has naturally been the disuse of those of the ancient English metres, some very fine ones, which required it. Mr.

Lettsom's excellent version of the Nibelungen Lied, though singularly faultless in its rhythm for a translation of such magnitude, is continually liable to be misread for want of the cæsural sign.

Hitherto I have had occasion to speak only of that primary metrical division which is common to verse and prose. I have now to speak of that which constitutes the distinctive quality of verse. Nothing but the unaccountable disregard, by prosodians, of final pauses could have prevented the observation of the great general law, which I believe that I am now, for the first time, stating, that the *elementary measure, or integer, of English verse is double the measure of ordinary prose*,—that is to say, it is the space which is bounded by *alternate* accents; *that every verse proper contains two, three, or four of these* '*metres*,' or, as with a little allowance they may be called, 'dipodes;' *and that there is properly no such thing as hypercatalexis.* All English verses in common cadence are therefore dimeters, trimeters, or tetrameters, and consist, when they are *full*, *i.e.*, without *catalexis*, of eight, twelve, or sixteen syllables. Verses in triple cadence obey the same law, only their length never—except in the Anglo-Saxon alliterative metre, of the peculiar laws of which I shall have to speak—exceeds that of the trimeter, on account of the great number of syllables or places of syllables (twenty-four) which would be involved in a tetrameter in such cadence. Monometers cannot stand in series as verses, though, as terminations of stanzas and interruptions of measure for peculiar purposes involving extended pauses, the effect of their introduction is often admirable. A few simple considerations will place this sectional admeasurement of English verse beyond question.

It has been rightly felt by Mitford and others, that 'verses' of less than six syllables are essentially absurd and burlesque in their character. The reason is, no doubt, the absurd comparative length of the final pause, required to render lines of five syllables in common cadence into consecutive verse; or the equally absurd alternative of the omission of the pause: such lines—and there are plenty of them in Skelton, and the burlesque lyrists—are at once felt to be *a mockery of verse*. It happens, however, that in metre, there is but half a foot between the ridiculous and the sublime. The six-syllable 'iambic' is the most solemn of all our English measures. It is scarcely fit for anything but a dirge; the reason being, that the final pause in this measure is greater, when compared with the length of the line, than in any other verse. Here is an example, which I select on account of the peculiar illustration of its nature as a 'dimeter brachycatalectic,' which is supplied by the *filling up* of the measure in the seventh line:—

'How strange it is to wake
And watch, while others sleep,
Till sight and hearing ache
For objects that may keep
The awful inner sense
Unroused, lest it should mark
The life that haunts the emptiness
And horror of the dark.'

We have only to *fill up* the measure in every line as well as in the seventh, in order to change this verse from the slowest and most mournful, to the most rapid and high-spirited of all English metres, the common eight-syllable quatrain; a measure particularly recommended by the early critics, and continually chosen by poets in all times,

for erotic poetry, on account of its joyous air. The reason of this unusual rapidity of movement is the unusual character of the eight-syllable verse as *acatalectic*, almost all other kinds of verse being catalectic on at least one syllable, implying a final pause of corresponding duration.

The iambic ode, erroneously called 'irregular,' of which there exist few legitimate examples in our language, is, if I mistake not, a tetrameter, with almost unlimited liberty of catalexis, to suit the variations of the high and stately lyrical feeling which can alone justify the use of this measure. The existence of an amount of catalectic pause varying from the time of two to fourteen syllables —for the line, in this kind of metre, may change at once to that extent—is justified by the analogy of the pauses, or stops, in a similar style of music; and the fact of this amount of catalexis being of the essence of this metre, seems to have been unconsciously felt and acknowledged by almost all who have written or attempted to write in it; for almost all have tried to represent the varying pauses, and to prepare the ear for them, by printing the lines affected with catalexis with shorter or longer blank spaces at the beginning; a precaution which seems to me to be unnecessary; for, if the feeling justifies the metre, the ear will take naturally to its variations; but if there is not sufficient motive power of passionate thought, no typographical aids will make anything of this sort of verse but *metrical nonsense*—which it nearly always is, even in Cowley, whose brilliant wit and ingenuity are strangely out of harmony with most of his measures.

It is necessary, in connection with this part of the subject, to remark, that although every com-

plete verse, in common cadence, must have the time of two or more metres or *sections* (as it may be more expedient to call these primary accentual divisions of verse), it by no means follows that the verse must begin or end with the commencement or termination of a section. In the quotation given above, the first accentual section begins with the second syllable of the first verse, and the second section commences with the last syllable of that verse; and, taking in the pause equivalent to two syllables, ends with the first syllable of the next, and so on, exactly as is the case with the sections in musical composition, which seldom begin with the first note of the strain or end with the last. When every line in a passage of poetry begins with the beginning of an accentual section, the effect is an increase of emphasis, but a great diminution of the impression of continuity, and, in general, of rhythmical beauty. Unmixed 'trochaics' or 'dactylics' have seldom been written by poets of fine musical feeling.

It will generally be found that in verses which strike the ear as extraordinarily musical, the peculiarity is mainly owing to an unusually distinct and emphatic accentuation of the first syllable in the metrical section, as in the following lines from the 'Merchant of Venice:'—

> 'The crów doth sing as swéetly as the lárk
> When néither is atténded; and I thínk
> The nightingale, if shé should sing by dáy,
> When every goose is cáckling, would be thóught
> No bétter a musícian than the wrén.'

In these blank trimeters, properly read, there is a major and a minor accent in every section but one. Shakspeare, the most musical of writers, affords more examples of lines of this constitution

than any other English poet. Dryden and Pope would have called these verses weak. Their 'full resounding line' studiously avoided these melodious remissions of the alternate accents. Curiously enough, Mitford quotes the above lines as an example of *departure* from the modulus of heroic verse, although his own principle of referring the metre of verse and that of music to a common law, should have taught him that they exemplify the most exact fulfilment of that modulus. The lovely song in 'Measure for Measure,' beginning—

'Take, oh take those lips away,'

Gray's ode—

'Ruin seize thee, ruthless king,'

and probably most other pieces which have become famous for their music, will be found, on examination, to depend for much of their mysterious charm upon the marking of the section by extra emphasis on the first accent. Indeed, this indication of the section would seem to be a necessity deducible from the fact of verse being measurable by sections, which would have no meaning unless their existence were made apparent by at least an occasional marking of them.

English poetry (including Anglo-Saxon) divides itself into three great classes: *alliterative*, *rhyming*, and *rhymeless*. The distinctions between these kinds are more real and vital than is commonly imagined; and I shall now state, as briefly as may be, the main characteristics of each.

There could scarcely have been devised a worse illustration of alliteration than Pope's often-quoted example, 'apt alliteration's artful aid.' A young writer who, had he lived a few years longer,

would probably have been famous without the monument of the most beautiful elegiac poem of modern times, in one of the thoughtful essays privately printed in his remarkable 'Remains,' observes justly that 'Southern languages abound in vowels, and rhyme is the resonance of vowels, while the Northern overflow with consonants, and naturally fall into alliteration.' Now, alliteration is so essentially consonantal, that, in Anglo-Saxon and Icelandic poetry, in which this assonance has been cultivated as an art, there is properly no such thing as alliteration of vowels; although, when the requisite number of alliterating consonants in each verse or distich cannot conveniently be produced, three words beginning with vowels are permitted to take the place of alliterating consonants, provided *that all these vowels are different*. Like rhyme, alliteration is no mere 'ornament' of versification: it is a real and powerful metrical adjunct, when properly employed. If rhyme, as I shall soon show, is the great means, in modern languages, of marking essential metrical pauses, alliteration is a very effective mode of conferring emphasis on the accent, which is the primary foundation of metre. Could any rule be fixed for the place, in modern verse, of that which may be said partly to owe its effect to surprise, as rhyme has been said to appeal to memory and hope, we should allot its position to principal accents only; that is, to the major accents at the beginning of sections; to those on either side of the strong cæsura in 'asynartete' verses, that is, verses having a fixed place for the cæsura; and so forth. To certain kinds of metre of the class just named, alliteration might be applied systematically with considerable profit, not in every line, perhaps, as

in the ancient alliterative metres, but in such lines only, as, on account of the irregular suppression or multiplication of unaccented syllables, leave the place of the indispensable pause so doubtful as sometimes to require a second reading to determine it. Although superfluous alliteration, like all kinds of superfluous emphasis, is vulgar and disgusting, the verse of the most classical of our poets is often much more indebted for its music to alliteration than is commonly supposed. By a poet, who is a master of his art, and knows how to conceal such assonances by alliterating initial letters with others in the middle of words, or by employing similar consonantal sounds represented by different letters, and so on, the most delicate, as well as the most forcible effects, of emphasis may be given, as if by magic, and the impression of metre everywhere enhanced as if by an invisible agent. Furthermore, as rhyme gracefully used has a certain charm proper to itself, and apart from its metrical value, so alliteration is sometimes a real ornament when it is little else, as in this epitaph 'On a Virgin,' by Herrick :—

> 'Hush'd be all things ; no noise here,
> But the toning of a tear ;
> Or a sigh of such as bring
> Cowslips for her cŏvering.'

But alliteration has served, and, in Icelandic verse, still serves, a far more important and systematic purpose. One of the most scientifically perfect metres ever invented, if, indeed, it be not perfect beyond all others, when considered with reference to the language for which it was destined, is the great Gothic alliterating metre, the only metre of which we can affirm that it has been the main vehicle of the whole poetry of any one language,

much less of a group of languages. The general law of this metre is, that it shall consist of a series of verses, each of which is divided, by a powerful cæsura, into two sections, or hemistichs. Each hemistich contains two accented syllables, and an indefinite number of unaccented ones; the accents being occasionally, though rarely, adjacent, and sometimes, though not less rarely, preceded, separated, or followed by as many as three syllables without accent, that being as large a number as can be articulated without destroying the approximate equality of time between accent and accent, which, I cannot too often repeat, is the primary condition of metre in all languages. In the first hemistich, the two accented syllables alliterate, and this alliteration is continued on to one, and that one most usually, though not, as Rask would have it, regularly, the first of the accented syllables in the second. This law, which seems to have been regarded by Mitford, Percy, Rask, Guest, Hegel, and others, as an arbitrary one, is *most admirably adapted to fulfil the conditions of a truly accentual metre*, that is to say, of a metre which, totally abandoning the element of natural syllabic quantity, takes the isochronous *bar* for the metrical integer, and uses the same kind of liberty as is claimed by the musical composer, in filling up that space. Of this metre, which in England outlived the Anglo-Saxon language several centuries, the following lines from 'Pierce Plowman's Visions,' may serve as an illustration; it being understood that the two distichs are usually written as one line in Anglo-Saxon verse.

'I looked on my left halfe
As the lady me taught,

And was ware of a woman
Worthlyith clothed,
Purfiled with pelure,
The finest upon erthe ;
Crowned with a crowne,
The king hath no better.'

This rule must appear extremely simple even to those to whom it may be presented for the first time. The artistical effect which results from its observance cannot be expected to strike so immediately, but we venture to say that no good ear, when once accustomed to it, can fail to perceive in this law a fountain of pure and beautiful metrical character,[1] or at least to absolve it from the charge of any essential quaintness or oddity, though an appearance of such character inevitably attaches itself at first to what is so far from our daily notions. The meaning of this law, the cause of its just effect, seems, as I have hinted, to have been overlooked by critics. If I do not err, the following is the right account of this interesting matter. It is to be observed, first, that, according to the rule of this measure, the hemistich or versicle of two accents may contain from three to seven, or even more syllables ; secondly, that this metre, like all others, depends for its existence on having the metrical accents in easily recognisable positions, a doubtful place for the accent being ruinous to any metre ; thirdly, that, in a language consisting, as the Anglo-Saxon does, chiefly of monosyllables, the place of the accent in a series of several syl-

[1] Since these lines were written, Mr. William Morris has used, with sometimes excellent effect, a metre very similar to this in his poem called 'Love is Enough.' His verses, however, would frequently have been the better for adhering more closely than they do to the alliterative law of the original metre.

lables must often be doubtful, unless it occurs pretty regularly on every second or every third syllable, as in iambic and anapæstic verse, or unless the immediate recognition of its place be assisted by some artifice. *Now, this artifice is supplied by the alliteration, which marks, as a rule, at least two out of the four emphatic syllables in each pair of versicles, and these two are precisely those which, in asynartete verse, like the Anglo-Saxon, it is most essential that there should be no doubt about, namely, the emphatic syllable which precedes, and that which follows the strongly marked cæsura by which the versicles are separated.* The metrical dot which, in ancient MSS. commonly marks the main cæsura in Anglo-Saxon and other Old English asynartete verse, is unessential in this place, if the alliteration be properly adhered to. The dot was most likely used at first only to distinguish verses,[1] and its further employment to mark the cæsura seems likely to have arisen from the lax observance, by some poets, of the alliterative law, which, in Anglo-Saxon verse, is sometimes neglected to a degree for which we can only account by the supposition that this unartistic use of the cæsural dot reacted upon the practice of the poets, and increased the laxity which it was employed to counteract. This, however, it could only do in very small part; it quite fails to supply the needful assistance to the accentuation in such a metre, although it marks the place of a pause. In fact,

[1] 'Anglo-Saxon poetry,' says Mr. Guest, 'was written continuously like prose. In some MSS. the point separated the sections,' *i.e.*, versicles or hemistichs; 'in others it separated the couplets' (*i.e.*, verses); 'in others the point was used merely to close a period, and the versification had nothing but the rhythm to indicate it.'

the law of alliteration is the only conceivable intrinsic mode of immediately indicating the right metrical accentuation where the language consists mainly of monosyllables and the verse admits of a varying number of unemphatic syllables, before, between, and after the accented ones.

The weak point of Rask's approximate statement of the laws of Anglo-Saxon versification has been pointed out by Mr. Guest, but the writer's view of *why* it is the weak point seems to me to be erroneous. Rask says that all the syllables preceding the alliterating syllable in the second hemistich are unaccented, and form a 'complement' which must be carefully separated from the verse, of which this 'complement' forms no part. Mr. Guest rightly thinks that, when, as sometimes happens, the alliterating syllable is preceded by four, five, or more syllables, it is impossible to read them all without accentuation; but the more forcible answer is, that the very notion of a 'complement,' as stated by Rask, is contrary to the nature of metre. The 'anacrusis,' or unaccented portion of a foot or bar, which generally commences a verse or a strain of melody, is the nearest approximation to Rask's idea of a 'complement' which the nature of metre will admit; but 'anacrusis' is always less than the isochronous metrical or musical spaces which succeed it, whereas Rask's 'complement,' as we understand, and as Mr. Guest understands it, may be of indefinite length, to the utter destruction of all metrical continuity. The true account of all those cases in which more than two, or at most three, syllables precede the alliterating syllable in the second hemistich is, that, when they are not erroneous transcriptions, they are metrical laxities, from

which we have no reason to suppose that Anglo-Saxon poets were singularly exempt.

The view which I have taken of the metrical motive of alliteration in Anglo-Saxon verse, as a means of emphasising to the hearer, and of immediately certifying to the reader, the places of the principal accents, is further confirmed by the fact, that, whereas, when the Anglo-Saxon poets used rhyme, they lavished it with an abundance which showed that it had no metrical value in their eyes, and was introduced for the mere pleasure of the jingle, and to such an extent, that every word in a famous poem quoted by Conybeare rhymes with some other, it was just the reverse with the alliteration, which is almost invariably limited to three syllables. Now, had it not been for the existence of the metrical motive which I have indicated, the liking for jingle which led to the composition of such rhymes would have also led to a similar profusion of alliteration; but this limitation of the alliteration to the places of the most important accents was strictly observed, and immoderate alliteration only manifested itself in English verse, when the alliterative *metre* had given place to metres regulated by *rhyme*, after which change, rhyme assumed metrical strictness and moderation, and alliteration, when used at all, was confined by no rule, but was sometimes carried through every word in a verse, without any regard to the accentual quality of the syllables.[1]

[1] Welsh poetry, from the earliest times, has made an abundant use of alliteration, the rules for its employment having even been fixed at congresses of the bards; but, as far as I can judge from examination of the verse without a knowledge of the language, the alliteration in Welsh poetry is not *metrical*, but '*ornamental*.'

It seems to have afforded matter of surprise to some, that the Anglo-Saxon poets, though fully understanding the metrical use of final rhyme, should have employed it *metrically* only when writing in *Latin*. A little consideration, however, will suffice to show that final rhyme is not only not necessary, but that it is contrary to the nature of Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse, of which the greatest commendation is the vast variety allowed for the position of the accents—a variety not possible where the accents are not artificially indicated. It is obvious that this variety would be very much diminished by the use of final rhyme, which, as in the only regularly rhyming Anglo-Saxon poem known, namely, that which Conybeare gives in his 'Introduction,' both supersedes the object of alliteration, and compels a like arrangement of accented and unaccented syllables in the latter part of each versicle. The accentual variations possible in an Anglo-Saxon verse—(Rask would call it a couplet)—of four accents, are computed by Mr. Guest as being 324 in number. Final rhyming of the versicles or hemistichs would greatly reduce this number.

Before taking leave of this part of my subject, something must be said concerning the question of the cadence of Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse. This question, at first sight, appears to be one of more difficulty than it really is. The actual metrical delivery of any long passage of Anglo-Saxon verse might puzzle the best Anglo-Saxon scholar, owing to the impossibility of settling, in every case, the right pronunciation of words, and to the fact that the laws of alliteration, as stated by Rask, though they must have afforded most sufficing assistance to those for whom Anglo-Saxon

was a living language, are by no means so invariably observed as to afford *infallible* guidance to *us*. The cadence, however, may be settled theoretically, by a consideration of the constant nature of metre. Indeed, I hold, against the opinion of Mr. Guest, that Mitford has settled the question, and has proved that the cadence is triple. Mr. Guest maintains that, in our ancient poetry, the common and triple cadences were inextricably mixed, and that 'it is not till a period comparatively modern, that the common and triple measures disentangle themselves from the heap, and form, as it were, the two limits of our English rhythm.' Now, in support of Mitford's view :—First : There is a strong natural probability that the verse of a language like the Anglo-Saxon, which, when spoken, would fall into 'common' or 'iambic' time, on account of the great preponderance of monosyllables, and the consequently usual alternation of one accented and one unaccented syllable, would assume the 'triple' or 'anapæstic' cadence, as the simplest and most obvious distinction from prose and ordinary speaking. Secondly : The triple and common cadences cannot be mixed, as Mr. Guest supposes them to have been, without destroying cadence altogether. The example which Mr. Guest gives of this imaginary mixture, tells strikingly the other way, and proves the defective ear, which seems to have led the writer into this and other mistakes. Mr. Guest quotes the following lines by Sir Walter Scott :—

> 'Merrily swim we : the moon shines bright :
> Downward we drift through shadow and light :
> Under yon rock the eddies sleep
> Calm and silent, dark and deep.'

The last line, Mr. Guest says, is in common cadence.

Now, its excellent effect, on the contrary, depends entirely upon the obligation to read it into triple cadence, by dwelling very long on the accented syllables, an obligation which results from its forming an integral part of a passage in that cadence. Forget the three preceding lines, and read the last as if it formed one of a series of seven-syllable trochaics, and its movement and character are totally changed. *Thus we see that an entire line may be in common or triple cadence, according to the cadence of the context.* In 'Paradise Lost' there are several lines, which, if they stood alone, or in juxtaposition with others like them, would naturally read into triple cadence. Thirdly and lastly: Much, if not all, the supposed difficulty in the way of regarding Anglo-Saxon verse as altogether in triple time, disappears when we remember that it was originally meant to be sung to the harp, and that its rhythmical movement might very well be obscure, confused, and apparently 'mixed,' until developed by highly emphatic delivery, and musical accompaniment.

The metrical function of rhyme, like that of alliteration, has never yet been fully recognised. The battle of rhyme was fought with much ability between Campion and Daniel, in the beginning of the seventeenth century. Campion, in his 'Observations on the Art of English Poesy,' violently attacked 'the vulgar and unartificiall custome of riming,' and supported his destructive with a constructive attempt, giving specimens of several modes of rhymeless English metre, his example of heroic verse being remarkable for its studied, and almost Miltonic science, as compared with the like attempts of Surrey and Grimoald. Daniel meets Campion's vituperation of rhyme, as a super-

fluous and barbarous excrescence, with solid, and sometimes profound, arguments. He justly says, 'Our rhyme is an excellencie added to this worke of measure,' and though himself a scholar, in a time of strong scholastic prejudices, declares it to be 'a harmonie farre happier than any proportion antiquitie could ever shew us,' adding, concerning the classic numbers advocated by his adversary, the following remarks, which are worth the consideration of those who, in our own day, would revive Campion's heresy:—

'If ever they become anything, it must be by the approbation of ages, that must give them their strength for any operation, or before the world will feel where the pulse, life, and energy lies, which now we're sure where to find in our rymes, whose knoune frame hath those due stayes for the mind, those incounters of touch as make the motion certaine, though the varietie be infinite. Nor will the generall sort, for whom we write (the wise being above bookes), taste these laboured measures but as an orderlie prose when we have done all. For the kinde acquaintance and continuall familiarity ever had betwixt our ear and this cadence, is growne to so intimate a friendship as it will now hardly ever be brought to misse it. For bee the verse never so good, never so full, it seems not to satisfie nor breede that delight as when it is met and combined with like sounding accents which seemes as the jointure without which it hangs loose and cannot subsist, but runs wildely on, like a tedious fancie without a close.'

This writer was the first to do justice to rhyme as a means of indefinitely extending the limits, and multiplying the symmetry of measure by the formation of stanzas.

'These limited proportions and rests of stanzas are of that happiness, both for the disposition of the matter, and the apt planting of the sentence, where it may best stand to hit the certaine close of delight, with the full body of a just period well carried, as neither the Greeks nor the Latins ever attained unto.'

The transcendent genius of Milton succeeded in establishing one kind of rhymeless narrative metre, in the face of the obstacles justly alleged by Daniel; and the ever-increasing familiarity of that metre to English ears, has given rise, in our days, to renewed doubts of the legitimacy of rhyme, and to renewed occasion for insisting on its claim. Rhyme is so far from being extra-metrical and merely 'ornamental,' as most persons imagine it to be, that it is the quality to which nearly all our metres owe their very existence. The octo-syllabic couplet and quatrain, two of the most important measures we have, are measures only by virtue of the indication, supplied by rhyme, of the limits of the verse; for they have no catalectic pause, without which 'blank verse' in English is impossible. All staves, as Daniel remarks, are created by rhyme. It is almost impossible, by even the most skilful arrangement of unrhymed verses, to produce a recurrent metre of several lines long. Campion, in his beautiful lines, beginning 'Rose-cheek'd Laura, come;' Collins, in his 'Ode to Evening;' Lord Tennyson, in his famous song, 'Tears, Idle Tears,' and a few other poets, in one or two short poems each, have succeeded in forming the stave without rhyme; but the rareness of these attempts proves the difficulty of succeeding in them, and, after all, the success seems scarcely worth the pains. Sir Philip Sydney and George Puttenham agree with Daniel in regarding rhyme as the highest metrical power we have. Mr. Guest, in modern days, does rhyme the justice to say, that 'it marks and defines the accent, and thereby strengthens and supports the rhythm. Its advantages have been felt so strongly, that no people have ever adopted an accentual rhythm without

also adopting rhyme.' Mitford and others have also recognised the function of rhyme as a time-beater, though their imperfect apprehension of the accentual constitution of our verse has necessarily prevented a clear understanding of that function. Hegel, whose observation on the necessity of the material counterpoise afforded by metre to the high spirituality of poetic thought has been already quoted, remarks, in comparing ancient with modern versification, that, whereas in the first, that counterpoise is mainly supplied by the natural length or brevity of syllables, which spiritual expression is not permitted to alter or destroy, in the latter, the verbal accent, conferred by the signification, gives length wherever it chances to fall. *Du liebst* is a spondee, an iambus, or a trochee, according to the signification borne by the words. The material or external element of syllabic quantity, is thus dissolved and lost in the spirituality which produces quantity instead of obeying it; and this loss, he maintains, is not compensated by the law of accentual division which remains. A new power, working *ab extra*, is required; and this is found in rhyme, of which the very grossness, as compared with syllabic quantity, is a great advantage, inasmuch as the greater spirituality of modern thought and feeling demand a more forcible material contrast.

The influence of rhyme upon measure is most remarkably shown in its simplest operation; for, in stanzas of elaborate construction, its powers, though always metrical and decisive, are too intricately involved, and too much connected, in their working, with other metrical principles, to be traced and described in this brief summary. Every one feels that, in a rhymed couplet, there

is an accentual emphasis upon the second line, which tends to a corresponding concentration of meaning. But this very power of concentration implies a power of distribution. Perhaps the stateliest and most truly 'heroic' measure in any language, dead or living, is the 'rhythm royal,' a stanza of seven ten-syllable lines, with three sets of rhymes so distributed that the emphasis derived from rhyme, in one part, is exactly neutralised by a similar concentration upon another. This, according to Puttenham, 'is the chief of our ancient proportions used by any rimer writing anything of historical or grave import.' This was the heroic measure of Chaucer and his successors for nearly three centuries, during which period 'the heroic couplet' was regarded as fit only for humorous subjects.

A rhymed stave has its criterion for length in the length of the period. That which is too long for a period is too long for a stave, which, as a rule, requires that there shall be no full stop except at the end. But the average length of the period will vary with the stateliness of the style. As the 'Pope couplet' takes the narrowest, 'Rhythm royal' assumes the widest limit practicable for a long poem. The former measure, after enjoying more than a century of unequalled favour, has now relapsed into its old disrepute; and most persons will now agree with Daniel, when he writes: 'I must confesse that, to mine own eare, those continuall cadences of couplets, used in long and continued poems, are very tiresome and unpleasing.' The fault of this couplet is not only its essentially epigrammatic character, which is but a relative defect; it is, furthermore, absolutely faulty, inasmuch as the combination of immediately

recurrent rhyme, with the long final pause, gives an emphasis contrasting too strongly with the very weak accentual construction of the line, which, *as it is ordinarily treated*, has no sectional —*i.e.*, 'dipodal'—division. This measure, having thus no place for the major accents *unmistakably* fixed, as is the case with all true dimeters and tetrameters, most poets have, throughout their writings, neglected those accents, or misplaced them. The poverty of this metre, no less than its epigrammatic character, fits it, however, for the purposes of satire, which, in most of its kinds, has any property rather than that of 'voluntary moving harmonious numbers.'

The class of metres, which, of all others, is proved, by theory as well as experience, to be the best adapted to the popular mind in all ages, could not exist in modern languages, without rhyme. This is the tetrameter of the trochaic or 'common' cadence. Many metres come under this head, and all of them have been really *popular*, which cannot be said of any form of trimeter in the same cadence. The ancient 'Saturnian,' though described by Hermann as a catalectic dimeter iambic, followed, with the division of a powerful cæsura, by three trochees, is, when scanned with allowance for the cæsural and final pause, obviously a tetrameter, as any one may satisfy himself from this illustration,

'The Queen was in her parlour, eating bread and honey,'

which Macaulay, in a note to the 'Lays of Ancient Rome,' gives as an example of 'a perfect Saturnian line.' The 'Cid' and 'Nibelungen Lied' are both in this metre, though the authors have adopted the great latitude, falsely called license,

in the use or omission of middle pauses and catalexis, which Hermann remarks in the employment of this metre by Livius Andronicus and Nævius. To this head also belongs the once popular 'Alexandrine,' as it appears in the Polyolbion. I suppose that most critics would call this a trimeter, but I defy any one to read it into anything but a tetrameter, having a middle and a final pause each equal to a foot. *The so-called 'Alexandrine,' at the end of the Spenserian stanza, is quite a different verse, though including the same number of syllables; it is the mere filling up of the trimeter;* and that Spenser intended it so is proved by the innumerable instances in which he has made middle pause impossible. Between the true Alexandrine, then, which is loaded with pause and catalexis to the utmost the tetrameter will bear, and the acatalectic tetrameter, as represented by the sixteen syllables constituting the half of the eight syllable quatrain, there are as many metres, which are real tetrameters, as there are possible variations of the middle and final pause. Of these, none has taken so strong a hold upon the English ear as the ballad metre of fourteen syllables, with the stress on the eighth, or, what is the same thing, the stave of 'eight and six.' Here, it may be remarked by the way, that Dr. Johnson's assertion that the ballad stanza of seven accents 'taught the way to the Alexandrines of the French poetry,' instead of being, as Mitford says, 'a proof of his ignorance of French poetry,' appears to indicate his just appreciation of their heroic verse, as belonging to the tetrameter stock and not the trimeter. This ancient narrative metre, which, though almost excluded from the 'polite literature' of the eighteenth century, never lost its charm for the people, has

lately recovered something of its ancient credit. Its true force, however, can only be shown in more sustained flights than have been attempted in it by modern poets. Properly managed, there is no other metre so well able to represent the combined dignity and impetuosity of the heroic hexameter. This was felt by the old writers, and, accordingly, we have Chapman's Homer, Phaer's Virgil, Golding's Ovid, and other notable translations in that grand measure. Of these, Chapman was the best poet, but Phaer the best metrist; and as this measure is again coming into fashion, I may be allowed to point out one interesting peculiarity in the versification of the latter. It is the use of what is commonly, but erroneously regarded as elision, as a deliberately adopted mode of relieving the cadence and approximating it to the rhythm of the hexameter. Here are four average lines:—

'Thus, rolling in her burning breast, she strait to Acolia hied,
Into the countrie of cloudy skies, where blustering windes abide.
King Œolus the wrastling windes in caves he locks full low;
In prison strong the storms he keeps, forbidden abroad to blow.'

In these four lines, we have no fewer than six real anapæsts, counting 'wrastling' as one. When we say *real anapæsts*, we mean to exclude those which are commonly called anapæsts, as—

'And we order our subjects of every degree,
To believe all his verses were written by me.'

In this, our vulgar triple cadence, the feet, by temporal measurement of the syllables, are nearer to tribrachs or molossi than anapæsts; whereas,

in cases of so called elision like the above, two syllables really are read into about the time of one, and *such cases constitute the only element of true temporal metre, in the classical sense, of which our language is capable.* Many poets have introduced a superfluous syllable for peculiar effects, but Phaer is the only writer I know of who has turned it into a *metrical* element in this way. The poet who may be courageous enough to repeat, in our day, Phaer's experiment (the success of which, in his time, is proved by its never having been remarked), must fortify himself against the charge of being 'rough,' 'unmusical,' and so forth, with the assurance, that, wherever there is true adherence to law and proportion there is also beauty, though want of custom may often make his law seem license to his readers. A considerable step has been taken towards the recognition of this element, as a regular part of English metre, in the omission, from the pages of our poets, of the comma indicative of an elision which does not really exist. This little digression may be concluded with Foster's remark, made at a time when the mark of elision was always used, that 'the anapæst is common in every place (of English iambic verse), and it would appear much oftener, with propriety and grace, *if abbreviations were more avoided.*'

'This tynkerly verse, which we call rhyme,'[1] includes, then, all the forms of the tetrameter, *the major accents of which could not be expressed to an English ear by any other means*, except alliteration, which is a sort of rhyme. I need not inquire into any of the minor and better recognised functions of rhyme in order to secure the student's respect for it.

[1] Webbe.

Campion has given examples of eight kinds of 'blank verse;' and with the dogmatism for which his interesting essay is remarkable, he asserts that these are the only kinds of which the language is capable; but it would not be difficult to double that number, reckoning blank staves or strophes as he does. That which limits the number of such measures is the necessity that the lines should be always catalectic, since, in the absence of rhyme, a measurable final pause is the only means of marking the separate existence of the verses, and, furthermore, that the strophes or staves should consist of lines of unequal length, in order to render symmetry possible. The common eight-syllable iambic, for example, ceases to be metre on the removal of the rhyme, although the six-syllable iambic, which is catalectic on, or has a final pause equal to, two syllables, makes very good blank verse; and a stave of equal lines, like that of Gray's Elegy, on the omission of the rhyme, though it may continue to be verse, has lost the means of symmetrical opposition of line to line, whereby it became an independent whole. But, notwithstanding the practicability of various kinds of unrhymed verse, there is only one which has established itself with us as a standard measure; and that is, of all recognised English metres, the most difficult to write well in, because it, of all others, affords the greatest facilities to mediocrity. Cowper, whose translation of Homer contains a great deal of the second-best blank verse in the language, says, in his Preface, that the writer in this kind of metre, 'in order that he may be musical, must exhibit all the variations, as he proceeds, of which ten syllables are susceptible. Between the first and the last, there is no place

at which he must not occasionally pause, and the place of the pause must be continually shifted.' This is what is commonly supposed to constitute the main requirement of blank verse; but this is very far from a sufficient statement of the 'variety' required by the metre in question. In the first place, pause is but one, and, perhaps, not the most important means of 'variety.' Milton, who first taught us what this kind of verse ought to be, is careful to vary the movement by an occasional inversion of the iambic accentuation in each of the five places: the variation of the vowel sounds is also most laboriously attended to by him; and rightly, for the absence of the emphasis which is conferred by rhyme, when it exists, upon one vowel sound, renders every repetition of vowel sound, within the space of two or three lines, unpleasant, unless it appears to have had a distinct musical motive. But the great difficulty, as well as delight, of this measure is not in variety of pause, tone, and stress, for its own sake. Such variety must be incessantly inspired by, and expressive of, ever-varying emotion. Every alteration of the position of the grammatical pause, every deviation from the strict and dull iambic rhythm, must be either sense or nonsense. *Such change is as real a mode of expressing emotion as words themselves are of expressing thought;* and when the means exist without reference to their proper ends, the effect of the 'variety' thereby obtained, is more offensive to a right judgment, than the dulness which is supposed to be avoided. Hence it is the nature of blank verse to be dull, or worse, without that which only the highest poetical inspiration can confer upon it. I am afraid to say how very small is the amount of good

narrative, or 'heroic' blank verse, of which our literature can boast, if I have truly stated its essential quality. No poet, unless he feels himself to be above discipline, and therefore above the greatest poets of whose modes of composition we have any record, ought to think of beginning his career with blank verse. It will sound very paradoxical to some, when I assert that the most inflexibly rigid, and as they are commonly thought, difficult metres, are the easiest for a novice to write decently in. The greater the frequency of the rhyme, and the more fixed the place of the grammatical pause, and the less liberty of changing the fundamental foot, the less will be the poet's obligation to originate his own rhythms. Most rhymed metres have a rhythm peculiar to themselves, and only require that the matter for which they are employed shall not be foreign to their key; but blank verse—when treated as it hitherto always has been, except occasionally by Shakspeare, that is, without any predominating reference to the normal places of the major and minor accents—has little or no rhythm of its own, and therefore the poet has to create the rhythm as he writes.

THE END.

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